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THE WRITINGS OF

ALFRED DE MUSSET

COMPLETE IN TEN VOLUMES

THE COMPLETE WRITINGS

of

ALFRED DE MUSSET

NEW YORK
EDWIN C. HILL COMPANY
1905

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POSTHUMES OF

ALFRED DE MUSSET

A SUPPER AT MADEMOISELLE RACHEL'S · THE DREAM OF AUGUSTUS · THE DONKEY AND THE STREAM · FAUSTINE · ODD POEMS · FAMILIAR LETTERS · THE KING'S SERVANT · THE POET AND PROSE-WRITER · SECRET TRANSACTIONS

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY

MARY W. ARTOIS · SIMEON SEIJAS

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POSTHUMOUS WORKS OF ALFRED DE MUSSET

CHARLES V. AT THE MONASTERY OF SAINT JUST

I

THE Emperor, one evening, saw the sun setting;
He bowed his head and remained silent.
Then, as he listened to the chiming of the clocks,
That he had, with a limping step, just primed,
He remembered that formerly, tho' unsuccessfully,
He had thought of contenting his people.
"O Lord, O Lord," said he, "who gavest me my desires,
I have eleven times in my life traversed the sea;
Ten times the Low Countries; England three times;
Have I made enough war to this poor François!
I have twice seen Africa and nine times Germany,
And yet I die a subject of the King of Spain!
What is the good of reigning? I now have no enemies;

Each one in turn has found sleep in his grave.
Like a famished dog, forgetfulness devours them all;
Already to the fall of one century the next is the dawn.

II

"Will I, then, be able to suffer longer,
Alone among so many kings, forgetting to die?
They held in stiffened fingers, when the cup was full,
God's sword to level the wide plains;
And decimated the mountains, was I so low
That the passing archangel saw me not?
Must I, in dotage, reckon my campaigns
As the shepherd does his flock upon the mountains
For the lessons of the past to be read on my heart
As in a faded book soon forgotten?
Too far in the night is my sojourn prolonged.
God knows to what children Europe has given itself!
Upon what arms will rest this old Universe,
Which, with its hundred States, with its four seas,
I carried on my breast and on my naked head!
Philip, may Saint Just exonerate him of his crimes!
For, from the day he succeeded his father, he felt

That he was too small for his great sword;
Has he not exchanged Heaven for Earth,
And against an austere confessor, a masked executioner?
France! . . . oh! what destiny, in its deep fancies,
Placed the duenna in the hands of a fool king,
Who goes, adjusting his doublet to his waist,
To the idle tournaments, imagining a battle!
Ah! when François died, who was the wise one
To suspect that only by Charles V. he was regretted?
With his last cry sounded my last hour.
Where find now any one to grieve for me?
My son abandons me here to my end;
Who can tell him whether from old age or from hunger?
He gives me death as the price for his birth,
My blessings have cured him of his gratitude.
He throws them against me as I am stumbling."

III

"It is well. I shall fall. My sun has set!
O Earth! receive me! for I give up my ashes!
Naked I came from thy bosom, naked I return to thee."
Thus spoke this man of the iron heart;
Then, finding himself in the darkness, he feared hell!

"O my God! if, in seeking a pardon that myself effaces,
I found anger written on thy face,
As this eve, looking for the waning day,
In the deserted heavens finds aught but night!
What! not a dream, nor sign, nor whispered word,
The strong echo of which is not then revealed!
No! Nothing, to you, O Lord, can be hidden.
Kyrie Eleison! for I have much sinned!"
Then, amid tears, he said his prayer,
With trembling knees and his face on the ground.
Suddenly he stops, he arises, his eyes fixed
On earth and his thoughts on heaven.
And here, upon the altar covered with funeral draperies,
The mournful torches have broken upon the darkness,
And the priests, standing as black cypresses,
Join together, astonished at the sinister surroundings.
And the old servants said, "Who is going to be born
Or to die?" and yet prayed without knowing who;
For the dark belfries swayed with great noise,
And resembled two giants that bellowed through the night.
They all beat their breasts and scarcely breathed.

Beneath silvern tears the sable sepulcher
Opened, nuptial bed dressed by death,
Where life in its arms eternity receives.
Then a phantom appeared, trailing itself along the walks.

IV

Livid, scaring the mournful funeral,
Lean, and with dead eyes, and his foot on the soil
Of granite, he tottered in the folds of a shroud.
" Who among you respects and honors me "
(And his voice, reechoed by the sonorous vault, Struck like the step of a bold knight)
" Let him come and sleep with me under a pillar.
I lie there and I expect to be followed by him who loves me.
Those who have hated me I shall follow myself.
There they are. Let us then pray for my past crimes;
Let us weep over and recite the hymn of the departed."
He walked toward his grave and paled: " Who stops me? "
Said he. " Is not a corpse necessary to the feast? "
And the coffin creaked under its icy structure,
And then the chorus sang the hymn of the departed.

VISION

I saw first about me strange phantoms,
Dragging long robes;
I know not whether they were women or angels!
They covered me with their beautiful fringed mantles
Of mother-o'-pearl and rubies.

As one breaks an armor with a sword-cut,
As a bold mariner
Breaks through the blue gulf that opens under his oar,
Thus their golden robes, in great furrows of flame,
Broke through the iron night!

They were flying! My curtain, like an old specter on guard,
Saw them pass by.
The pupils shone from their velvet-like eyes.
I heard the whispering of their fluttering wings,
Which ruffled against me.

They were flying! But the groups, to the roof suspended,
Capricious spirits,

Suddenly skipped, then suddenly lost,
Plunged into the night as a swift arrow
Flies into the heavens!

They were flying! I saw their hair, black like ebony,
Falling in torrents.
Sobbed and caressed me with their long rustling tresses;
While of a kiss I felt the thrill
To the depth of my soul.

God Almighty! I have seen the timid sylphs
That die at the sun!
I have seen the beautiful nude feet of the fugitive nymphs.
I have seen the ardent bosoms of the restive dryads,
With their rosy thighs!

Nothing, no, nothing was worth this fragrant kiss,
Fresher than the morning!
Purer than the look of an Andalusian eye!
Sweeter than the language of an Asiatic woman,
With her satin lips!

Oh! Whoever ye may be, floating o'er my head,
Shadows without soaring bodies!
Let me, oh! let me hold you entwined,
Drink in thy kisses love insensate,
Drop by drop and long!

Oh, come! We will place in the silky alcove
A silver lamp.
Come! The night is sad and day is the lamp!
Come! Fair or dark, indifferent or joyous,
Simple-hearted or changeable!

Come! We will throw roses on the couch;
For perfumes are sweet!
And the sultana at night scents her breath
Whilst taking off her robe and sandals
For her bed of bamboos!

Alas! Of beautiful nights heaven is sparing,
As much as of beautiful days!
Hear ye the lament of Ferrara's harp,
And under his divine fingers thrum the guitar?
Come, O loves of mine!

But nothing more remains where the partitions creak,
Save the cold and naked shadow;
I hear the cats howl, like a child being killed;
And the moon in transit reflects on the street
The angles of the houses.

TO POLAND

Until the day, O Poland! when thou showest
Some fearful sacrifice, like that of Greece,
Some Missolonghi of a novel brand,
Whate'er thou doest none will comfort thee.
The hour is come; ye heroes, fight and die!
Fight! for Europe is unpiteous;
She wants fresh leaven in her meed of blood,
Thy agony her Roman holiday!

STANZAS

I pondered over a volume antique,
On Plato's dogmas and the laws of Fortique.
I wished of life to try the burden.
I was tired of the leisure of youth,
And I entered upon the path of beautiful hope,
In this new world.

Often I had been told: "How charming is thy age!
Thine eyes, happy child, know no bitter tears.
Luxury alone can draw sobs from thee."
And I said also: "How beautiful is youth!
Everything is so serene; all pathways to it
Are bestrewn with flowers!"

However, like myself, all buoyant with youth,
Some guests were singing, full of joyous rapture;
I put out my hand advancing toward them:
"Friends, shall I not have a seat at the feast?"
Said I to them. . . . And not one turned his head,
Nor raised his eyes!

I went away thoughtful, death at the bottom of the soul.
Then before my eyes appeared a woman.

I believed that during the night an angel had passed.
And every one admired her smile full of charm;
But it struck me with horror, for never had a tear
Effaced it.

Though God is just, to my devouring thirst
The desert offered not one fountain sweet.
I was a lonely tree on an unhappy soil;
An exile in a howling solitude
That has no echo for my murmuring voice
That is lost in the heavens.

What mortal knows not, in the midst of the storms,
Where to rest his head under shelter of the wrecks?
And I, plaything of the waves, alone with my sorrows,
No friendly sail strikes my eye;
None, on this sea where my ship is lost,
Carries my colors.

O sweet illusion! lull me in thy dreams.
While asking happiness of thy merry stories,
I run away tremblingly from the reality;
For to me spring has no sweet shelter;
The sun is fireless, the ocean has no shore,
And the day is without light!

Thus, to cheer this solitary ennui,
When God threw upon earth good and evil,
Myself I would find nothing but my share of
sorrow;
Spurned guest of the public feast,
My notes would disturb the harmonious chant
Of the children of the Lord

Oh, if I resembled those men of stone
Who, seeking the friendly darkness and fleeing
the light,
Have found in vice an easy pleasure!
Those live happy! . . . But he who in his soul
Keeps some glimmer of a nobler flame,
That one must die.

Ennui, that frightful vulture, has marked him
for its prey;
He finds his torment in the common joy;
Breathing in heaven all the fires of hell,
Happiness for him is but a horrible cup,
For the sweetest honey upon his lips changes
Into a bitter draft.

Until the day when by ennui his soul devoured,
Finds, to rest in, some unknown grave,
And returns to nothingness, from which man
came;
As a burning poison, enclosed in clay,
Ferments, and breaks at last the too frail vase
That had contained it.

1835.

TO ALFRED TATTET

No, my friend, thank God, for three words of criticism
I have not become a satirical poet;
My silence is not, tho' it might be doubted,
A pretension to make myself heard.
I well can, I believe, without fear and without envy,
When I see the fainted muse falling down
Amid the heap of our still-born romances,
Burn it, in passing, with my pen under the nose;
But God deliver me from censuring the silly!
Even tho' I felt the fire and the fancy,
And of this sad fight should I be the victor,
The aversion I have for it would take away my heart.

NOVEMBER, 1842.

In 1842, when Alfred de Musset had published his "Epistle on Idleness" and the fragment entitled "After a Lecture," his friend, Alfred Tattet, wrote inducing him to pursue a satirical strain that had already resulted in two brilliant successes. The foregoing verses are the poet's answer to this letter.

TO MADAME A. T.

LET youthful love that was sincere
Forgive a friendship old
That seeks a soul that still is dear,
Though years between have rolled;
Did I possess but half your soul,
I now bequeath to you the whole.

1843.

The day on which Alfred de Musset paid his first visit to Madame A. T., not finding her at home, he wrote on his card the verse quoted.

IN THE PRISON OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

WHOEVER thou mayest be, I conjure thee
To place thy bed on the other side.
Don't drag thy blanket
Over the already maltreated bosom
Of this sweet creature.
A pencil full of ability
Created its lovely figure,
Which is so voluptuous.
She is beautiful, let her remain pure.

Verse written below the head of a woman drawn on the wall.

SONNET TO MADAME * * *

Young angel, soft are thine eyes and sweet thy voice;
One short instant did I sit by thy side,
And, the tempest over, as the bird flies,
My happiness went also, having lasted but one eve.

And now, who would have me console them?
Lightning, fleeing, leaves the horizon sad and dark.
Judge not my life as careless and frivolous;
For if I am joyous, who would not be at sight of you?

Alas! I would not dare love you, even in my dreams!
It is from such low depths that I look up to you!
It is from so high above me that your eyes incline!

Go, be happy; forget me very soon,
As the cherub forgot the Levite,
Who had seen him pass and traverse the heavens.

July 30, 1884.

SONG

We had just seen the bull,
Three youths, three maidens.
Upon the lawn it was beautiful,
And we danced a bolero
To the time of the castanets.
"Say, neighbor,
If I look well
And if my skirt
Fits this morning!
Do you think my waist fine? . . .
Ha! Ha!
The girls of Cadiz like that pretty well."

And we danced a bolero
One evening, 'twas Sunday.
Toward us came an hidalgo,
Gold embroidered, with feather in hat,
His hands askance on his hips;
"If thou of me desirest,
Sweet smiling brunette,
Say but the word,
This gold is thine."
"Go your way, beau sire . . .
The girls of Cadiz do not understand that."

And we danced a bolero,
At the foot of the hill.
On the road passed Diego,
Who possesses nothing but a cloak
And a mandolin.
    " Sweet-eyed darling,
    Wish you to-morrow
    Be conducted to church
    By a jealous lover?
Jealous! jealous! what nonsense!
        Ha! Ha!
The girls of Cadiz fear that failing."

1844.

SONG

Good morning, Suzon; of all my wild flowers
Thou art always the prettiest!
I return, just as thou seest me,
From a long journey in Italy.
Of paradise I have had the run;
I have made verses, I have made love,
    But what matters it to thee? (Repeat.)
I pass before thy house;
    Open thy door.
    Good morning, Suzon!

I have seen you at the lilac time.
Thine joyous heart had just bloomed
And thou sayest: "I will not,
I will not be loved yet."
What hast thou done since my departure?
He who starts too soon returns too late.
    But what does it matter to me? (Repeat.)
I pass before thy house;
    Open thy door.
    Good morning, Suzon!

1844.

ON THE ALBUM OF MME. TAGLIONI

If you wish no longer to dance,
If you are only passing
Through this gay and grand theater,
Run not after your shadow,
But try to leave it behind with us.

TO THE ARTISTS OF THE DRAMATIC GYMNASIUM ON THE EVENING OF THE FIRST REPRESENTATION OF BETTINE

My piece is young and I am old;
Children, of it I am not the cause.
You will play to us something else,
And play it well, but not better.
Take not, I beg of you,
These words for flattery,
Nor my regrets as farewells.

1851. (?)

RONDEAU TO MADAME H. F.

It is easy to please to who wishes to please.
An ignorant man listened to by a twaddler,
A rhymster flattered by a journalist,
Without any trouble make their business.
To praise a fool is but pure charity.

A half-century Aramint
In her mirror sees a flattered portrait.
If we have to praise our blue-stockings,
It is easy.

But if it is necessary to paint with sincerity
The look simple and good, the involuntary gracefulness,
The facile mind and reason severe,
With a double charm, beauty surrounding,
Of such a portrait, surely one will hardly say,
It is easy!

1853.

AUGUSTUS' DREAM

The Emperor's Palace. At the Farther End a Garden Behind a Colonnade.

Scene I

(*Chorus of warriors, chorus of young girls.*)

Chorus of Young Girls. Warriors, whence come ye? During these feasting days
What happy fate brings you back to this spot?
What victorious hand has on your noble heads
Placed those glorious laurels?

Chorus of Warriors. We come from Pharsalia and Germania.
To the end of the world and beyond the seas
Following Cæsar and his genius.
We have, as conquerors, traversed the universe.

A Young Soldier. Friends! And we also have been to war,
Valiant heroes, whose triumphant steps
Without wearying victory have run over the earth.
Hail! We are thy children.

General Chorus. Let our voice in this palace resound!

The Warriors. Sing, children.

The Young Girls. Sing, conquerors.
Chorus. And let the air everywhere be filled
With songs, light, and flowers.
The Warriors. Here comes Cæsar.
The Young Girls. Here comes the empress.
The Warriors. Friends, let us retire.
The Young Girls. Let us withdraw, sisters.
Chorus. Hail, Cæsar!

Scene II

(*Augustus, Livia, Octavia.*)

Augustus (*answering the outgoing chorus*). Hail! Yes, my dear Livia.
Cæsar has this eve sent for Octavia.
I have a care upon which I would have thee consult.
Livia. What care can my dear lord trouble?
Augustus. None, surely, when I behold thee smile.
Since thy heart beats in the air that I breathe,
I would brave the gods of my honor jealous!
Livia. If only my heart is wanted, what fear, my lord?
Octavia. Is it some enemy who again raises his head,
Some new Brutus getting ready his sword?
Augustus. No, in new Brutuses I have no faith.
And Rome is, I think, as wearied as myself.

Octavia. Is it some vanquished one, some tributary king
Disobeying my lord at the confines of the earth?
Some Scythian slow to pay his taxes?
Augustus. The heavens are cloudless and the world at rest.
Livia. Could it be perchance some bad omen?
A dream can affect the wisest spirit;
But for one that speaks truth, many are those that lie.
Augustus. By a dream have often the gods warned me:
I fear nothing—but I think of the Empire,
Of these Romans whom I love and who love me in turn,
And it is not for myself that I have any care.
Livia. My lord expressed happiness from the moment of being loved.
Augustus. May this light diadem from thee,
Livia, forever keep away all ennui,
And that pleasure alone flutter around it.
That I be the only one in charge of the terrible inheritance
That on the death of Cæsar I received to share,
When under the daggers the greatest of men
Fell, letting the world escape from his hand!
Not that of your counsel and wisdom
I would not, when necessary, claim assistance;
Your genius, free from the vulgar law,
Shows us side by side, wisdom with beauty.

I knew it; my heart for it loves thee the better.
My sister until to-day was my only Egeria;
Upon thy two charming arms now resting,
I shall have two confidantes, love and friendship.

Livia. To my lord they shall be faithful and sincere.

Augustus. Listen to me, then, my beautiful advisers.
Returning from Actium, where everything to me was surrendered,
Left in the universe alone and without enemies,
Having nothing but to reign, I thought one day,
Seeing Rome delivered of its tyrants,
To return it after all to the Republican state
And to break, now conqueror, three scepters in my hand.
Cæsar was avenged; what mattered to me the rest?
I thought I saw in this project a celestial advice.
But as in everything before acting,
It is to the human reason that we must listen,
I called to me, from our great politicians,
Those most accustomed to public affairs.
One way and another the point was debated;
Neither one side nor the other convinced me.
Therefore I remained the master and followed my fortune.
I have now chased away this importunate idea.
My throne is too dear to me to wish to leave it.
(*To Livia.*)

Since near me thou hast to it ascended,
But a new torment saddens and devours me.
I have wished for, I have sought, I have conquered repose.
And this blessing which is envied of me is the greatest of evils.
I, who have always been seen, during my whole life,
Hold idleness for mortal enemy,
'Tis necessary that my arm sleep, and that having conquered all,
I know not how to live, having scarce lived.
I have again in this case, upon this oppressing evil,
Consulted what Rome has of importance.
Some have advised me to reform the laws,
To found, to create peoples and kings,
To increase my treasures, to reign and to wait;
Others, to walk in the steps of Alexander,
To surpass him even, and beyond the Indus,
To go far in quest of countries unknown.
No more than on the former occasion their facile eloquence
Has inspired my heart with confidence.
Those who wish for war, believing they flatter me,
Point out dangers that I must avoid;
Those wishing for peace, for a contrary motive,
Make me find greater what I hesitate to do.
Such is the reason that made me call you to-night,

Sister; and such the subject on which I wish to speak.

Octavia. My brother, when Cæsar, seeing his faith belied,
Crossed the Rubicon to meet Pompey proud,
More than a valiant warrior, grayed by combats,
Was at his side and he consulted him not.
As by the storm his eagles let loose
Dashed from the summit of the astonished Alps,
And when he arrived, sword in hand,
Scarcely was it known that he was on the road.
When counsel is sought on hesitations and doubts
Upon the good that one pursues, upon the evil that one avoids,
Is it Augustus who speaks? or by what change
Is it thus, before him, to speak with impunity?
Listening to what thou hast said, if I am not mistaken,
Thou hast at heart some vast enterprise.
This project, whatever it may be, is without doubt unknown to me,
But it is the cause of the ennui that holds thee.
Since when, tell me, the master of the earth
Has he then condemned his thoughts to silence?
Before what fortune or what adversity
Cæsar's nephew has he then hesitated?
Is it at the camp of Modena? Is it at the walls of Perouse?
Is it when Antony, with his Egyptian queen,
Fled in terror, by our eagle vanquished?

Or when Brutus, on dying, renounced all virtue?
When has the young Cæsar ('tis thus thou art called)
Otherwise than in triumph entered Rome?
To combat to-day thou durst not leave it,
Unless thy rhetors deign to consent!
Why not take the advice of a slave?
Remember, my lord, remember Octavia.
Are not these chants, these laurel branches,
A single name in the voice of a whole people?
Remember those days that were thy delight,
The altars covered with blood from the sacrifices,
Thine courser without a spot, unwilling
To trample on the flowers thrown on his path;
Remember above all, if thou goest to war,
These three words that Cæsar wrote to us:
"I have come, I have seen, I have conquered."
Augustus. Dear Sister,
On all occasions I love to see a great heart.
I listen with pleasure, from thy young head,
To the old Roman spirit, breathing of conquest.
This steed, whose steps have seemed so sweet to thee,
For thee was given to me by the Egyptian kings.
Livia, it is thy turn to speak; what must I do?
Livia. My lord, in this palace I am almost a stranger;
Scarcely have I bent my knees before the gods;
I arrive, and in this place I know but my lord.
Rome in these questions is too interested

For me to be allowed to express my thought.
Augustus. What is it?
Livia. Peace! I admire and like not
This glory that one finds looking for the battles,
I beg for pardon and would give my life
Rather than displease my sister Octavia;
But the emperor has done all that one can dare:
Returning from Actium, one can rest.
I am, my lord, but a woman. As much as any one
I feel my heart beat when the bugle sounds.
But Cæsar is avenged, so my lord said;
Brutus's head has rolled at thy feet.
Who else could do so much, what remains to be done?
The fatherland to-day calls thee its father.
The people love thee, place thee in the rank of the gods,
And, living upon earth, see thee in the heavens.
What could a battle, or an army do
To add to thy renown, far reaching and sublime?
What wilt thou teach us now when thou art victor?
One must not seek further beyond happiness.
Cæsar (we know) stepping on his word,
Has crossed the stream leading to the capitol;
But of watching over him the gods had tired;
Inflexible Destiny had said: "It is enough!"
Of the man thou bearest, preserve the memory;
Think of the future and have respect for history.

Allow not an empty dream to approach thee;
Thy glory is ours—thou canst not touch it.

Octavia. Never for him who knows how to conquer is there enough glory.

Livia. Peace, when wished for, is also victory.

Octavia. If seen too easy, it can be disdained.

Livia. Yes, without doubt one can; but it must be won.

Octavia. Heir to the hero who saved him as father,
Cæsar's nephew must reign by war.

Livia. By war or by peace matters not, my sister.
Cæsar's nephew will return to us his grandeur.

Augustus (*rising*). Enough on this subject. Approach, Octavia,
And place thy hand in that of Livia.
Though your sentiments differ,
They both to me are dear; I yield, give in to them.
(*To Octavia.*)
If of Janus I open the murderous gate
Thou wilt accompany me, thou beautiful warrior.
(*To Livia.*)
If in battle I still some happiness experience,
Thou wilt solace me for having been the victor.
Ye both have recalled me to myself;
Farewell! Remember specially that I love ye.
(*Exeunt Livia and Octavia.*)

Scene III

(*Augustus, alone, then Mecænus.*)

Augustus (*sitting down*). O absolute power!
O supreme grandeur!
Art thou of Destiny hate or favor?
(*The door opens.*)
Who comes there?—It is you, my dear Mecænus!
And whence comest thou, so seldom to be seen?
To forget the Emperor without doubt is to thee allowed,
Also the world and time, but not thy friends.
Mecænus. Cæsar, may Jupiter protect and help thee!
May the universe, subdued, yield to thy will!
And thy fortune, at all hours, at all places. . . .
Augustus. Sit down. I know that I must be a god.
It is said thy gardens are a small Parnassus,
And that thy falernian have made Horace's verses.
What says he? What does he?
Mecænus. Always dreaming;
Led by his fancy, he walks behind it.
Augustus. And Virgil?
Mecænus. Always faithful to his genius,
His immortal voice is all harmony.
And to say a word, without seeking for better,

He knows no longer how to speak other than the language of the gods.

Augustus. You love them, Mecænus?

Mecænus. Yes, my lord, I confess
That the Muse is for me the great enchantress,
And that all the twaddlers, enemies of their glory,
Are not worth three verses written by my friends.

Augustus. And does this poetry satisfy you?
You inhabit Olympus and live on ambrosia.
Ah! Mecænus is happy.

Mecænus. Is not so Cæsar?
What crushed serpent has risen on his path?

Augustus. None. I have, thanks to the gods, conjured the tempests.
I look at the monster with the hundred heads slaughtered.
But I suffer to-night from a strange pain.

Mecænus. At the height of glory, at the height of happiness,
Can it be? . . .

Augustus. Yes, Mecænus, and I know not what to do.

Mecænus. Will the Cæsar permit a sincere language?

Augustus. Yes.

Mecænus. I fear to use terms somewhat low.

Augustus. It is the beautiful speeches that are not listened to.

Mecænus. Cæsar, take the spade or push the plow. . . .
That is not an ennui; it is ennui that kills, my lord.
If, like me, at sunrise, my lord
Would come to the fields to see the earth awaken,
And walking through the dew would gather
A flower previously watered by the gods,
And bring it yourself to the house,
My lord would not suffer from ennui.
Augustus. He is nearly right.
Mecænus. If Cæsar would judge by himself,
And see how everywhere flourishes the supreme beauty;
How much the smallest flower or its nascent bud
Has cost of labor, to die in passing!
The poets of to-day believe that poetry,
Without seeing or knowing anything, is born in their fancy;
Others, to find it, run the world over.
She is in a blade of grass, on this foot-path;
In the green almond trees that the rain whitens;
In this ivory easy chair on which rests my lord's arm;
In every place on which the sun pours its light
There is always grandeur and always beauty.
Augustus. Poets in thy country are in extreme favor,
But one might at times take thee for one.

Of thy charming leisures I should like the sweetness;
They are of a happy man's, but not of an emperor's.
Where should I find time for such carelessness?
Whilst thou art dreaming, I must be thinking,
Mecænus, and acting whilst thou thinkest.
Dost thou know my life well?
Mecænus. Yes, sire, I know it.
I know that your hand, fertile of will,
Holds a bow the arrow of which has traversed the world;
And already of the past the brilliant remembrance
Makes my lord incessantly look to the future.
But why the emperor, accusing me of weakness,
Believes my humble roof haunted by idleness?
When Horace and Virgil come there in the morning
To breathe in my woods the verbena and the thyme,
I listen in rapture to those inspired lips
Smilingly pouring out words of gold.
My bees gaily flutter before them;
Heaven becomes purer and the air sweeter.
Since when has action been injurious to thought?
When Tyrtæus had donned lyre and sword,
Before a whole army he used to march
Singing, and victory hastened up to his voice.
Alexander, the conqueror, tho' always in war,

Used to keep as a treasure the verses of old Homer,
And reread ceaselessly, at all hours, in all places
That immortal poem dictated by all the gods.
The great Julius, braving the hazards of wreck,
With his manuscript struck out to swim,
And commanding the waves to touch it not on the way,
He well knew what a scepter he had in his hand!
And yet Cæsar will not . . .
Augustus. I repeat it.
In spite of thyself, my friend, thou art only a poet.
When Horace with thee talks Greek or Latin,
Thy spirit is blooming like the flowers in thy garden.
The foremost of heroes, Alexander and my father,
Have both, I know, liked Homer's verses;
But when their grand souls took any pleasure in them,
'Twas between two battles they found this leisure.
When my father himself has narrated his wars,
It was in the midst of his camp that he made his commentaries.
However little soldier-like one be, one feels, when reading them,
That the noise of the clarions everywhere resounds.

Another thing, Mecænus, in the frivolous Muse
Whose gracefulness charms or amuses the mind,
It is but a play on words, created by idleness,
A dream, and, say all, a useless thing.

Mecænus. What does my lord say? What! the Muse useless!
Is it only a play on words, when Virgil sings,
Tibullus, beloved of all! Horace, beloved of the gods!
What! the Muse to this extreme has fallen in your eyes!
Useless! And her sisters, Cæsar, what would they say?
Think it well, my lord, these immortal virgins
Hold each other by the hand in the sacred vale,
And like a wreath surround Apollo.
Consider that on all those who have outraged them
This redoubtable god has taken vengence.
His arrows, true, would not reach Cæsar;
Beware, however, of exciting his anger.
The Muses have but one soul and one common cause;
All of them will flee, if only one is hurt;
And far from this palace, made to gather them together,
They will fly never to return.

Augustus. Farewell. I will take care of thy immortal sisters.

See that the Parnassus, ere becoming angry,
Comes sometimes with thee to visit me!

Scene IV

Augustus (*alone*). Singular contrast in the human inconstancy!
This lazy spirit, so feeble in appearance,
That a state affair should arouse him,
Turns out the coldest, the best adviser.
(*He sits on his bed.*)
During long nights and long days,
When of the uncertain world the destinies wavered,
I have seen him looking beyond the horizon,
And alone, in his opinion, being always right;
But that Horace in passing, take and carry him away,
Shows this great man to be a child that dreams.
What a surprising charm, what a strange power
Can then these pleasures of this mind possess,
For a soul so highly born with so much force
To suddenly derail it from its course?
Why has not a similar dream come to me?
Exists there a world to Cæsar unknown?
(*He falls asleep.*)

Scene V

(*Augustus, the Muses.*)

The Muses (*singing*). Yes, Cæsar, there exists a world so sublime
That we and the gods alone can approach.
When the foot of a mortal reaches its summit,
On no other human road can he thereafter walk.
Augustus (*asleep*). Well! And who are ye?
The Muses (*singing*). The daughters of Memory.
Cleo (*singing*). Take care! . . . I shall write thy history.
I am Cleo; thy life is in my hands.
(*Pointing to Calliope.*)
This is my sister, the Muse of glory.
Take care! . . . I am on thy track!
Urania (*singing*). My name is Urania, and my face is veiled
By the inflexible order of the gods.
Night my accomplice; but my starry robe
Is resplendent with the burning lights of heaven!
Polymnia (*singing*). Seest thou, Cæsar, seest thou come out of the earth
These temples, these palaces that are born at my command;
Seest thou the obscure asylum, seest thou the humble cottage
Become the palaces of kings?

Euterpe (*singing*). I am not the Muse of glory;
I am the Muse with the golden fingers.
I sing, and the universe preserves the memory
Of the heroes by me consecrated.
Chorus of the Muses. Yes, Cæsar, there exists a world so sublime
That we and the gods alone can approach.
When the foot of a mortal reaches its summit,
On no other human road can he thereafter walk.
Augustus (*rising*). Stop!
(*The Muses stop.*)
If from the heights of the eternal spheres,
Jupiter thus sends ye voyaging
By order of Cæsar, in spite of your wings,
Daughters of the gods, ye shall remain here.
Conquering, I have traversed the earth,
Similar to the infuriated lion.
If I have marched in my anger,
I will sit down in my pride.
(*To Cleo.*)
Thou who of the dead gatherest the legacy,
Since thou art on my track,
I will leave thee a page
Such as thy hand never traced.
(*To Urania.*)
Thou, whose face shines under that veil,
Offspring of night, raise thine eyes,
Behold the glitter of my star;
I shall stop it in the heavens.

(*To Polymnia.*)
Let them then come out from the dust,
These palaces raised by thee.
I have received from the Romans a city of stone,
Let it be of marble after me!
(*To the other Muses.*)
Ye all, daughters of Memory,
Who have long known me;
Muses, sing to fresh days of glory,
Greater than those we have passed by.
Final Chorus. My sisters, let us sing to fresh days of glory,
Greater than those we have passed by.

1853.

STANZAS

On the Pompadour Costume of Mlle. ——

Voltaire, august and supreme shadow!
King of madrigals *à la crême*,
Of the vermilion and the baskets!
Seated at the foot of the statue,
I said to myself: "What has become
Of that wig with the three laurels?

O Corisander, do they not resemble
Flies that, on a bosom of snow,
The abbot dropped from his finger-tips!
Good marchionesses, our grandmothers;
Who without being too straight-laced,
Rendered to God what was due Him!

And you, thunder-stricken heroes,
Alas! And two *bal poudre* reigns
In a half century effaced!"
When the other evening, at a fête,
My eyes suddenly fell
Upon a face of times gone by.

But it was not, O Voltaire!
A dowager's fly

That revives a failing eye;
It was the most discreet fly
That could a mouth graze,
Rosier than the lily is white.

Fine fly, as we can believe,
Which, to pose its black wing
Amid the roses of the garden,
Had chosen, like the bee,
The freshest and ruddiest
Of all those of the morning.

Remain then, happy fly.
If this traveling bee,
Which flew of yore, we are told,
Amid the groves of Greece, and
Came to tickle the thick lip
Of the great philosopher Plato,

Had discovered in the mid-shade
This flower with rosy leaves,
What would she have done but stop
Upon this English pearl
Lips that heaven could only have made
To smile or to sing?

JOAN OF ARC

Recitative

I seek in vain the repose that from me flees.
My heart is filled with the sorrows of France.
To these desert lands, in the darkness and silence
Of the mother country in mourning, my woes
follow me.

SONG

Somber forest, solitary retreat,
Dumb witnesses of my secret ennui
To my sight, of my unhappy country,
Hide at least the shame and the misery.
Sad branches, if we are vanquished,
        Hide the roof of my old father;
Perhaps, alas! I shall see him no more!

RECITATIVE

Everything is still in the valley.
The nightingale sings under the leaf
Of melancholy and of love.
Already the dawn awakens nature;
Already upon its verdure shines
The soft light of a beautiful day.
What is that noise in the fields?
The bugle sounds at the foot of our ramparts.
Of the foreigner I see the colors
Floating in the distance over the mountains.

SONG

HAVE ye abandoned us,
Guardian angels of the mother country?
Pity us if of God we are forgotten;
If He remembers us, come!
I have thought I felt the earth tremble.
I have thought that heaven answered,
And that in a glare of light,
From the depths of the forest a voice called me,
It is not a human voice:
It has seemed to me it came from the heavens.
Mother of Christ, is it thine?
Hast thou pity for the tears that flow from my eyes?
Yes, the Holy Spirit enlightens me.
I feel the spirit of avenging God!
The force and the wrath of heaven
Invade my heart.
—To war!

Date uncertain.

IMPROMPTU

God has willed it, we seek pleasure.
Every true attention is a desire;
But the desire is nothing if one hopes not;
And to hope is quite an affair.
That is why we must love illusion.
Blessed be the first who knew how to find a name
for demi-folly,
For this enchanted dream
Which does not take from truth
Anything but what is necessary to make us love
life!

TO MADAME ——

Impromptu

Never speak to me of an old friendship.
In your golden hair, when with it Spring plays,
He, who has left you—he, so soon forgotten!
His freshness in the spirit, and his flower on the
cheek!

AT THE FOOT OF A PORTRAIT OF MLLE. AUGUSTINE BROHAN

I HAVE seen thy smile and thy tears,
I have seen thy heart sad and cheerful;
Which of the two has the greater charms?
Tell me what I love the most:
The pearls of thy mouth or those of thy eyes.

REVERIE

When the peasant sows and he opens the ground,
He sees only his grain, his oxen, and his furrows.
Nature in silence performs the mystery.
Lying in his cart, he awaits his harvest.

When his wife, returning at night to her cottage,
Says to him, "I am pregnant," he awaits his
child.
When he sees death about to seize his old father,
He sits at the foot of his couch and awaits it.

What know we beyond? . . . and human
learning,
What has it discovered further in its domain?
Upon this great universe it has walked, 'tis said;
And during five thousand years it has always
been searching.

RETURNING

Happy the voyager whose cherished town
Sees him return to port with the dawn of day!
Who hails at the same time heaven and the fatherland,
Life and happiness, the sun and love!
Look, comrades, a ship approaches.
The sea, that took him away, brings him back in time,
Foaming under him like a bold steed,
Who, on rearing, feels his old cavalier.

Hail! whoever thou art, thou whose white sail
On this large horizon runnest up palpitating!
Happy, when thou returnest, if thy erring star
Has made thee love the shore! happy if thou art expected!
Whence comest thou, beautiful ship? At what distant coast,
Superb leviathan, have thy sides been washed?
Art thou wounded, warrior? Comest thou from a long voyage?
'Tis a thing to be seen, when a whole crew,
Taking young to sea, returns gray-haired.
Art thou rich? Comest thou from India or from Mexico?

Is thy keel heavy, or have the north winds
For thy ransom taken all the weight of thy treasure?
Hast thou braved the storm and crossed the tropic?
Hast thou during two years promenaded over death,
Devouring with haggard eyes thy trembling compass,
For an European woman, indolent and pale,
To be enabled to sweeten her bath with the perfumes of the harem,
And wear in the waltz a necklace of corals?

How the heart leaps, as the native land,
At the moment of returning, begins to approach,
And from the vast ocean comes out with its steeple!
And what a divine anxiety, during this short interval,
Where one feels it arrive and ready to touch!
Oh Fatherland! Oh Fatherland! Ineffable mystery!
Sublime and terrible word! inconceivable love!
Man was then born only for a corner of the earth,
There to build his nest and live some day.

HAVRE, SEPTEMBER, 1855.

PROMENADE

In these woods that a cloud gilds
How slow darkness is to sleep!
It is not night, it is the dawn,
That gaily seems to depart;
For we know that it will come back.
Thus, leaving hope to hatch,
Softly dies the memory.

1856.

LAST VERSES OF ALFRED DE MUSSET

The hour of my death, these last eighteen months,
From all sides rings to my ears.
After eighteen months of weariness and watchfulness
Everywhere I feel it, everywhere I see it.
The more I struggle against my misery,
The keener becomes in me the instinct of misfortune;
As soon as I attempt to step on the ground,
I feel my heart suddenly stop.
In fighting, my strength wears out and wastes.
Even to my repose, everything is a struggle;
And like a tired-out steed,
My courage, extinct, totters and falls.

1857.

THE KING'S SERVANT
ACT THE FOURTH

Scene I

(*Landry. Frédégonde.*)

Frédégonde. Will she escape?
Landry. At midnight.
In an hour, perhaps. . . .
Frédégonde. That is enough; leave me,
And be especially careful to tell nothing to the king.

Scene II

Frédégonde (*alone*). She wants to escape! this night, in an hour. . . .
Must she depart or must she die?
Let us consider; time presses and I have but one instant.
Occasion calls me, and hazard awaits me.
Of this treason what shall I do?
Galsuinde had her reasons for giving me her place.
The hour was ripe and she well understood it;
She is afraid, the Spaniard, and saves herself at any price.

From to-morrow, if I wish, this sudden flight
From this deserted palace leaves me mistress;
These porticos, these walls, these plains are mine;
To-night I remain alone with the ghost of a
king.
What will my rival do? She runs off to Spain;
Accompanied to the frontier by an old man.
Shame precedes and contempt follows her;
She will be thought expelled, seeing she flees.
What can she do? Sob in her father's arms,
Narrate her woes to her mother;
Perhaps in her cause enlist a few soldiers,
Who will draw the sword but will not fight;
Seek other loves and on the banks of the Tagus
Air the languors of an early widowhood;
I am inclined to pity her: no dangers, no wit-
nesses;
Let her go! After all, it will be a crime less.
But what do I say? Has the king repudiated
her?
No. Absent to-morrow, will she be forgotten?
She departs, but with a heart filled with a mortal
affront,
Purple on her shoulder and the crown on her
head,
And I, who from weakness spare a victim,
Can only carry an illegitimate title,
And whatever love for me the king may have
I can only recover a fragile power,
Withered by disgust, broken by a whim! . . .

Rather in my bosom let my heart perish!
Is it for so little that for two years
Of hell, in this heart I have borne the torments?
—This sad grandeur, so long awaited—
Is it then for so little that I have from it descended,
Falling from the supreme rank to the lowest degree
Without uttering a sigh, without backing one step,
Caressing in turns and serving my rival;
Placing on her pillow her nuptial robe,
I myself on her bosom carefully fitting
The purple that from mine I had just pulled off;
On the throne steps, an abandoned slave,
Coming to wash the place where I was crowned;
Without paling tending Galsuinde in her sorrows;
In her eyes, in her tears, calculating the future,
And among so many other evils having no other joy
Than the hope of seizing and bringing down my prey?
No, no! I must have more than a miserable love.
My passion is satiated by broad daylight,
And I do not feel at all an idle weakness
To content myself with a title of mistress!
Let a court woman have this baseness;
I am a daughter of the people and have more pride.

No, Galsuinde! On leaving this fatal chamber,
Thou shalt not carry my royal spoils,
And that glorious name that before thee I bore,
Thou shalt return to me such as I lent to thee;
Thou shalt abandon that bed that terrorizes thee,
And to-morrow, if necessary, I will return to it as a servant,
But I shall come out of it as a queen, and if, to banish thee from it,
In thy grandeur of one day, thou must be entombed,
Accuse Heaven that has condemned you.
Madame, you have come to hurt my destiny;
We are to each other an obstacle here below.
Let God judge between us! you shall not depart!
(*The king appears.*)

Scene III

(*Frédégonde, the King.*)

The King. Is it thou, Frédégonde? Approach and tell me
What forgetfulness of thyself to thy ruin conspires?
Thou knowest my tenderness, and the old friendship
That of thy troubles always shared half.
Who makes thee lose thy temper till thou bravest the queen?

She is of royal blood, she is thy sovereign.
The church protects her and her proclaimed rights. . . .

Frédégonde. She is much more, Sire, if you love her.

The King. Let us leave aside vain discourses; before all, she is queen.
Knowest thou the punishments thy insolence carries?
And with what rigor this crime is expiated?

Frédégonde. I knew it but lately and have forgotten nothing.

The King. And thou dost not tremble?

Frédégonde. Fear to me is unknown.

The King. Dost thou despise death?

Frédégonde. No, Sire, I have seen it.
I have reckoned its blows and counted its steps,
I know its worth and I fear it not.

The King. So, in spite of thyself, blind in its weakness,
Since it must give way, thy pride raises itself,
Miserable pride thy heart believes it swells!
One can brave death, but not pain!
Failing respect, must thou be warned
To save thyself at least from the horrors of torture?
Must thou be reminded in what awful agony
The dumb victim slowly expires?
Dost thou no longer remember the dungeons of Clothaire?

Frédégonde. I remember, Sire, that he was your father.
But what have they, these tortures, that can terrify?
The coward only, Sire, lets himself be treated thus.
Even under the knife clinging to life,
He drags in his blood his shameful agony
And when his mangled foot feels the cold of the grave,
Throws himself in tears into the executioner's arms.
But a heart all its own that disdains to live
Threatened by torture, easily delivers itself.
All means can answer; but it runs to the quickest.
On the irons that fetter him, he can break his head;
The floor of the dungeons, the walls that surround him,
Everything harbors death; let them be struck and they will give it.
Death is everywhere, Sire, it is here.
What, then, is death?
(*Showing her dagger.*)
Why! my God! here it is.
The King. Which will be thy shelter, and what thinkest thou of doing?
Frédégonde. Galsuinde begged you to return her to her mother;

I have mine, Sire, and I will go to her.
Where my life commenced, there it must end;
Not in the bosom of courts, on a gilded couch,
Where nobly moans a princess in distress,
Not under the green curtain of the blossoming orange-trees,
Luring royal woes to sleep;
But on the banks of torrents, amid arid rocks,
Where still stand the Druids' altars;
In the depths of the forests, virgin to man's steps,
Where has not penetrated the hatchet of the Romans.
There is in these deserts a solitary rock:
There watches with my sisters my mother distressed.
No path leads to their obscure abode;
The forest shelters them, and earth is their bed.
On the hillock rises a funeral cypress;
My bleeding father sleeps there under the heath;
My mother offers sacrifices to those pious rests,
For she still believes in our ancient gods.
Heaps of granite and secular oaks
Make a vast rampart to this solitary spot.
Everything is night and silence, and the strayed shepherd,
Only tremblingly walks under the sacred shade.
In this somber palace I saw the light.
One day I came out of it, my heart full of hope;
I wished to see closer what I dared to dream.

I have seen; my mother waits, I will go find her again.
Such will be my shelter.
The King. Is that truly thy thought?
Thou committest a fault, and believest thyself offended;
Thou wishest to bury thyself in a frightful desert.
And thy mother, sayest thou, still worships the false gods?
Frédégonde. Doubt you it, Sire? Do you think it sufficient
To bring everything to its knees, that a prince enters a church?
When through politics he has humbled down,
Alone the proud Sicambre for him has prayed.
Yes, we serve our gods and are proud of it.
My mother has her sickle and her black tunic;
And at night, in secret, more than once her hand
Has made the blood stream over our iron trivets.
The King. Jesus! What art thou saying?
Frédégonde. At the time when I was queen,
My care watched over her, she scarcely accepted.
More than a dark slave, to yourself unknown,
Carried her my presents, and never returned.
I protect from afar this sacred head.
Now, like myself, poor and desperate
Widowed, and her white hair covered by horrible rags,
She goes into the woods, slowly dragging herself,

In search of those bitter fruits that avaricious nature
Upon earth with regret throws to its creature.
Then, as winter comes, the children must
Go on the road to beg of passers-by;
My sisters, my poor sisters, extreme of misery!
Go to the threshold of castles to implore alms for their mother,
And to sing at hazard, with tears in their eyes,
Those Gallic songs that our ancestors loved.

The King. If such is their misfortune, why live isolated?
It is to run at night to their meeting places
That the vanquished barbarians thus hide themselves.
Can I succor evils unknown?
Why show themselves not? Why evade my presence?

Frédégonde. Those barbarians, Sire, are prouder than one thinks.
They show themselves not for a piece of bread;
Their faces are veiled when they stretch out their hand.

The King. Let them, then, keep peace in their solitary pride
That makes them exiles from the rest of the earth!
Is it to those mendicants thou thinkest of going?

Frédégonde. Yes, to beg like them, with them to exile myself.

The King. Like them also, without doubt, to your funeral altars
Offer an impious cult to the spirit of darkness?
Thou dost not answer me? In the name of the Almighty!
Thy hands, at least, thy hands would with horror recoil before blood!

Frédégonde. Perhaps. Farewell, Sire; I see the queen coming.

The King. How am I to refuse and how to consent?

Frédégonde. Do not be alarmed; it is I who will depart.

The King. Thou going?

Frédégonde. Yes, Sire; too much hatred and envy
Haunt in this spot my humble and sad life.
I had hoped, on losing a great dream forgotten,
To find oblivion at least in default of pity,
And that my past grandeur would be forgiven,
On seeing the misery in which you have left me.
I deceived myself—love passes away with favor,
But hate is faithful and clings to misfortune.
Till the border of the grave it pursues its prey.
I know what urges them and fills them with joy,
Those hearts, those base hearts, bent on my ruin,
Who but yesterday called themselves my well-beloved subjects.
My crown has fallen, and it is its haughty mark

That is branded on my head, bent down to the dust.
In the fields, on the square, at church, at the palace;
The shadow of my power is wherever I go.
'Tis it they insult, and my queen's mantle
Floats still before their eyes above my woolen robe.
It was what made proud your parvenu valets;
Those who kissed my hands tread on my naked feet.
What matters my distress, my tears ignored,
By coarse labors my dishonored hands?
I have reigned over these people, and it is enough for them.
Thus clings to us human ingratitude,
Till even on suffering it exhausts its hate;
The more implacable in its impunity,
As in pride it pays all its baseness!

This important piece, in which one can remark with what subtlety the author knows how to conform with the exigencies of art and of tragic style, was taken to Mademoiselle Rachel in the summer of 1839. She received it with joy, learned it by heart, and recited it several times at small parties of intimate friends: however, instead of urging the poet to complete his work, she preferred to wait for the representation of *Polyeucte,* and afterward for that of *Phèdre.* Time went on; the ardent fire went out on both sides. A piece entitled *La Servant du Roi* was played at the Odéon theater, and though it did not create much sensation, it was found deflowered. Mademoiselle Rachel had some differences with

the Theater Français. She wrote a letter, sending in her resignation as member; afterward she withdrew this resignation, but sent it in a second time. It was while these debates were going on that the poet composed, one morning, the following stanzas, in which one can see his sadness, his lost illusions, and his renunciation:

TO MADEMOISELLE RACHEL

If thy mouth must nothing say
On these hereafter priceless verses;
If I have not, to be understood,
Either by tears or thy smile;

If in thy voice, if in thy features,
Lives no longer the fire that animates me;
If the noble heart of Monime
Must no longer know my secrets;

If thy sad letter is signed;
If thy guardians of an old grave
Let their priestess indignantly
Go out, carrying her torch;

This tongue of my thoughts
Which thou knowest, which thou upholdest,
Shall never be pronounced
By other accents but thine.

Perish first my memory
And my beautiful ambitious dream!
My genius was on thy glory;
My courage was in thine eyes.

Mademoiselle Rachel never received those stanzas; the poet, after having written them for his own recreation, did not think it *à propos* to send them to her.

A MORNING WITH DON JUAN

FRAGMENT

(*Don Juan, sleeping. Enter Loporello, opening the shutters.*)

Don Juan (*yawning*). Ah! ah! ah! oh!

Loporello. It is a quarter past twelve. The time when high mass is said.

Don Juan. Are the horses harnessed?

Loporello. No, sir, they will be in an hour.

Don Juan. Blockhead, I told you to awaken me in time to start.

Loporello. I thought you might be hungry; and then your toilet. . . .

Don Juan. What is the weather?

Loporello. Mild and damp.

Don Juan. Some one is sneezing in the antechamber.

Loporello. The saddler, the tailor, and the innkeeper are there.

Don Juan. Very well, I am satisfied to let them wait until I have arisen. Stay, Loporello, take a hundred louis and give them to the carriage man. No, that would be discourteous toward my tailor.

Loporello. Then shall I not bring you anything?

Don Juan. No, you need only send three pistoles to the duke who won them from me last evening at quinze, on word of honor. At the same time ask for a cup of tea and my letters.

(*Loporello leaves, and Don Juan goes to sleep again.*)

Loporello (*returning*). There is nothing but a love-letter this morning.

Don Juan. Hey?

Loporello. I say there is nothing this morning but a love-letter.

Don Juan. What kind of a seal has it?

Loporello. A lion and a cupid.

Don Juan. Burn it carefully. Come, raise me up; give me the newspaper. Ah! ah! how tired I am!

Loporello. I can only find yesterday's paper.

Don Juan. It is no matter; they are all the same.

Loporello. Ah! sir, the cause of freedom is not succeeding.

Don Juan. You are nothing but a churl. Open the window. I salute thee, beautiful sky! My lungs expand when I see thee. Ah! what an execrable peal of bells! Go to the devil with you for waking me too late! I was dreaming, and you, what were you dreaming about, for you look like a fool sniffing the air.

Loporello. I hear what you say.

Don Juan. Begone. Ho! Loporello, come back, are you sure I can not leave here for an hour?

Loporello. No, sir, no sooner.

Don Juan. I shall not leave thee, beautiful France! no, I shall not leave thee without regret! One hour more! and the valley of the Seine will be lost to men. Who is the fool who has slandered thy women?

Loporello. Here is the tea.

Don Juan. A more tender feeling comes over me when I see among the lists of my lady-loves the names of thy women, O France! than when I read the more musical Italian names. I love thee, France!

Loporello. The saddler and the coachman are crying out as though we were deaf.

Don Juan. Give them something to drink. Where is my list? Sit down and read it to me to amuse me.

Loporello. Has monsieur the spleen?

(*He sits down to begin to read.*)

Where shall I begin?

Don Juan. Anywhere.

Loporello. The Baroness de Valmont.

Don Juan. What a big mustache she has!

Loporello. Henriette de Merteuil, no dates.

Don Juan. Continue.

Loporello. Miss Julia Pipty.

Don Juan. A charming girl, but she was as stupid as a goose.

Loporello. Jeanne of the three stars.

Don Juan. She was a Shrove Monday.

Loporello. The marquise of the Terrace des Feuillants.

Don Juan. Her eyes were as liquid as tears. When I waltzed with her I was afraid of breaking her, poor child. She only cost me a bouquet.

Loporello. Anaïs de Saint-Ange.

Don Juan. What comes after that?

Loporello. Nothing.

Don Juan. Keep quiet and write these two Sicilian lines:

Lontano dagli occhi,
Lontano dal cuore.

Loporello. Fernanda.

Don Juan. The vivacious little thing.

Loporello. The great chatterbox with a blue ring.

Don Juan. What a nose she has! But I admire her intelligence.

Loporello. The Baroness de —— she is very fat.

Don Juan. Pass on.

Loporello. Three names appear; Emma, a modiste; a Sister of Charity, whose name is not down.

Don Juan. And what is left to quench my thirst? A great thirst, O my God!

Loporello lets the list fall, musicians enter the court and make a horrible din. Loporello goes to the window.)

Loporello. Ah! sir, what a crowd! young and old, devotees and maidens, passing along, chatting gaily.

Don Juan. Come here, take a pen, and write.

Loporello. I am ready.

Don Juan. "If an unhappy mortal who adores you deserves your pity, O charming stranger! return to mass."

Loporello. I have finished.

Don Juan. "And follow the secret instructions that you will find behind your chair, my dearest life, idol of my soul." Fold and seal it.

Loporello. What shall I do next?

Don Juan. Take it, blockhead, very delicately in your clumsy hands; hang the love-letter over the window; and as soon as you perceive some pretty girls, let it fall on the prettiest head you see.

Loporello (*at the window*). Here comes a big, round, plump girl, with furtive glance and vivacity, her round hat waving in the breeze.

Don Juan. Alas! I know you, young ladies. Do not let go the note, Loporello.

Loporello. Here comes a little cinderella, walking by the side of a canoness; one can tell

by her modest demeanor that she is the curate's niece. She wears good gloves, a clinging skirt, and her clothes are new.

Don Juan. Hold it tight.

Loporello. But monsieur will not be pleased with any one.

Don Juan. Perhaps.

Loporello. Then get up and look for yourself.

Don Juan. No, I will take my chances. Let me stay in bed until we find this beautiful person.

Loporello. Here comes a duchess of the antechamber, escorted by her duke, a lackey, and a little dog to match.

Don Juan. Just as rowdies hang on the backs of cabs, so courtiers cling to men in power. A miserable set! I do not care for anything, Loporello, not even for women. . . .

Loporello. Oh, oh! here comes an Englishman, what a prude!

Don Juan. None of him.

Loporello. I see a pale *narcisse*; she has an English walk and downcast look.

Don Juan. No more; he who feels himself parched by the heat of summer needs to thrust his head in a spring purer and fresher than crystal; pass on, Loporello; and in the winter I love the untrodden snow.

Loporello. Here comes a young girl well

brought up, properly chaperoned by a governess with blue spectacles.

Don Juan. Oh! that will take too long; it will take two weeks to overcome her scruples.

Loporello. What do you say to a bland old maid, a consumptive? She has a little hacking cough, like a member of the Academy when he reads the remonstrances of some one who was not elected.

Don Juan (*yawning*). Ah! ah! stay, Loporello, tear up the note.

Loporello. My faith, sir, it has fallen.

Don Juan. Ah! where?

Loporello. At the smallest feet I have seen thus far; besides, the young lady is veiled; I think she must be at least fifteen years of age. See her stoop down and pick it up. She is reading it. Oh, what black eyes! her governess did not notice it, thank God!

Don Juan. And what impression has it made on her?

Loporello. Her hand trembles.

Don Juan. Like her heart.

Loporello. She returns and can not tell whence the manna has fallen.

Don Juan. Place your crooked fingers on your lips and send her a big kiss.

Loporello. It makes her laugh.

Don Juan. Ah! wretched creature! She is a grisette! To whom do you commit your master,

twice fool that you are? Do not let me cope with one of these Werthers, with ardent imaginations, who stand behind the counter.

Loporello. Sir, dismiss me if this is not a bit of a princess.

Don Juan. Really? Raise me up and give me my stays.

This fragment appeared in *La France Littéraire,* December, 1833.

SECRET TRANSACTIONS

A SAYING

(1837)

CHARACTERS

MARIANI, *a Musician.*
ABBÉ FIORASANTA.
COUNT APPIANI.
JULIA.

Rome.

(*A Studio.*)

Mariani (*alone*). Now that you are so beautiful, my dear instrument, come here. I must go to bed. I have polished you beautifully, my treasure! How you shine! You are satisfied. You were ashamed of this dust. (*He takes out his flute.*) Little one, little one, you are growing old! Ah! God in heaven, so am I . . . Any light downstairs? Alas! it is midnight. At this hour the rich are awake and the poor asleep. Bah! all this music I must copy will be finished to-morrow. The devil take the pen that has blotted this page! (*He shuts the window.*) What reason is there for me to be either sad or gay? Does living peacefully and hopelessly make one happy or unhappy? Ah! poor bed, you feel like a tomb. Poor walls, the sunlight scarcely reaches you; you are so dark! Never

mind, be as dark as you like. Mediocrity is a sad thing. To be sure I dine. I come and go hither and thither like a fox in a menagerie; but that is not what one might call living. Then age comes, and death . . . What am I dreaming?

It seems to me just now that I hear some one running. Who is calling? Oh, dear! people are hiding; they instinctively stop; they are up to some mischief in this neighborhood. (*Knocking.*) Who is there?

(*A voice from without.*)

Open the door, open it, whoever you are.

(*Enter Julia, wearing a mask, and Abbé Fiorasanta.*)

The Abbé. Shut the door! the door! Oh! I am more dead than alive.

(*Julia sits down.*)

Mariani. What can I do for you, sir?

The Abbé. You are dying, my beautiful Julia. This precipitous flight, my idol, troubles me as much as it does you. I shall be chased from the Papal States.

Mariani. Why so?

The Abbé. Silence, my dear sir! peace! peace! I hear the sound of armed men and horses. Ah, God! We are followed! God save us! Sir, is there no other door by which we can escape?

Mariani. Yes, my cellar door which faces the fields.

The Abbé. Will you believe it? They are scouring the country! O Heaven! those who have sworn to kill me are here on horseback. Ah! all is over; this is the end of everything; my last hour has come.

Mariani. If your only object in knocking at my door is to ask hospitality, my abbé, I shall retire for propriety's sake.

The Abbé. Ah! sir, if you can only save us in one way or another, my uncle, the cardinal, will reward you.

Mariani. Say one word; tell me what I can do?

The Abbé. Be satisfied when I tell you that we are pursued, sir, and let your heart divine the rest. It is impossible for me to tell you the entire secret of an adventure . . .

(*He whispers in his ear.*)

Julia (*rising*). Sir, this man is my lover; a quarter of an hour ago I left my mother's house, and my brother is in pursuit.

The Abbé. We can not remain in this place, my flame, my cherished one; see the torches searching all around this place.

Julia. Fiorasanta, are you afraid?

The Abbé. The only thing to do is to separate. What can be proved if we are found in two different places?

Julia. Ask this gentleman for a sword, and stay.

The Abbé. That is just the way with women! You mean that a duel between me and your brother would settle things! Stay, beautiful Julia, do not speak of that; I am sure that in putting you under the care of this gentleman, I am leaving you in the hands of a gallant man. I shall take my chances in the fields, and return to the palace if I can. To-morrow, at dawn, I shall come for you, and we shall leave together.

Julia. Why are you going to flee, leaving me behind?

The Abbé. Because we can not flee together without incurring danger. A man alone can not be readily caught, and, besides, what harm can they do to me?

Julia. Go, if you wish.

(*She sits down again.*)

The Abbé. You see, sir, what is the matter? This girl is the Countess . . .

Mariani. I do not ask you to tell names, sir; here is my cloak and the door is open.

The Abbé. It was all planned that we were to leave to-night in a post-chaise. We were found out, and obliged to flee . . . Oh, Heaven! while I am speaking Count Appiani, her detestable brother, thrusts his torch into every corner! His Holiness will never pardon me; and my uncle, the cardinal, will not give me a ducat.

(*He puts on Mariani's coat.*)

Happily he does not remember having seen me. I was in the seminary as late as last Sunday; besides, he never recognized my features in all this flight. Sir, I confide to your care the most charming woman in Italy.

(*He leaves.*)

Mariani. You weep, miss?

Julia. No.

(*Silence.*)

Mariani. Torches are approaching the house. It is very possible they will knock, as you yourself knocked. What will your brother do if he finds you here?

Julia. I do not know.

Mariani. Do you think it would be a good plan to secrete yourself in an unused room in this house? If so, I can deny everything if they come to look for you; or do you think it would be better to give yourself up to the generosity of Count Appiani?

Julia. I do not know.

Mariani. Nevertheless, you are the only one to decide what you wish me to do and what you yourself must do. Take heart and do not despair.

Julia (*showing the stiletto she carried in her belt*). Here is something which does not despair.

Mariani (*aside*). This woman either does not amount to much or she merits having everything

done for her. Let me see! Ought I to return her to her brother? Is it necessary for me to be mixed up in this affair? I do not know this woman. Let me see! let me see! Am I a coward or have I a heart?

(*He sits down. A knock at the door.*)

I am sure that is her brother. It is not very difficult to find this isolated house. Should I open the door? And if I open it what shall I do?

(*A second knock.*)

In fact, this affair is no concern of mine. Is it my fault if her lover is a real coward, and if he throws himself in the arms of the first person he sees, to save his skin? On the other side, if I wash my hands of it, her brother may be cruel, and she has no one to defend her. Where did she come from? And who knows if she will not laugh at me if I play the braggart? I must do all or nothing.

(*More knocking.*)

Julia. What are you thinking about, sir?

(*She lifts her mask.*)

Mariani. Enter this way, madame, and leave everything to me.

(*Julia leaves.*)

Be she what she may, she is as beautiful as the sun.

(*He opens the door. Enter Appiani.*)

Appiani. Who are you?

Mariani. And you?

Appiani. My sister is here.

Mariani. How do you know?

Appiani. Are you her lover?

Mariani. What would you do if I were?

Appiani. Say yes, or no. You are a coward.

Mariani. No.

Appiani (*calling*). Julia, come out from this room. Do not hide; I saw you from the window.

(*Julia enters.*)

Julia. How do you do, Benvenuto? Here I am.

Appiani. My sister, your mother disinherits you. Your father curses you.

Julia. Jesus! Jesus!

(*She falls.*)

Appiani. If you know me, you know that I will not pardon you. Live as you can; I have not come to look for you and take you back, as you may imagine; make your lover support you. We can do without you, young girl.

Mariani. Keep quiet; she is dying.

Appiani. Let her die; a woman with a lover who does not protect her! By Bacchus! what a bad name has a man who lets a woman fall and does not lift her up!

(*Mariani sits down and counts his fingers.*)

Six hundred ducats from Angelo, two hundred ducats from Batesta. The house, includ-

ing the garden, may be worth fifteen hundred . . .

Appiani. What kind of a name has a woman who leaves her father and her mother for a villain who does not step forth when called? Hallo! is there nothing here resembling a man? Did you run away alone, Julia?

Mariani. The cost of the concert and the lighting up of the country, I have fifteen hundred francs left . . . Fifteen hundred francs and some over . . .

(*He counts in a low voice.*)

Appiani. What are you muttering, valet?

Mariani. Have you any other relative, any other protector, madame?

Julia. Not one.

Mariani (*to Appiani*). Come here; you are a dead man.

(*He exits with Appiani. Julia, alone, kneels and recites the Ave Maria. A long silence. Mariani enters.*)

Julia. O Christ! my brother!

Mariani. Pray for him.

Julia. Wretch, why have you killed him?

Mariani. Because I was forced to fight, and if I had let him begin, he would have killed me.

Julia. Why did you fight for me? You are not my lover.

Mariani. Your mother disinherits you; your father curses you. I asked you if you had any

other protector, and you said no. If it had not been for your brother's wrong-doing, everything might have been amicably arranged. Your family would have relented and revoked the sentence they pronounced against you; but your brother insisted on a duel. Enter this room once more, dear madame; the very sight of me should fill you with horror.

Julia. Let me leave this place.

Mariani. Where would you go? Your father's house is closed.

Julia. I have a Father above whose house is open.

Mariani. Madame, God does not comfort the poor, and you are disinherited. If you imagine that one can become religious at will, you are mistaken.

Julia. I can die, then.

Mariani. If you die, I have committed a useless crime.

Julia. What, then, do you want of me?

Mariani. I have told Fiorasanta, your lover.

Julia. You know him?

Mariani. Yes. Are you proud, you daughter of the Appianis?

Julia. Proud enough not to speak to a coward.

Mariani. He does not come.

Julia. Why?

Mariani. Because he is a coward. Now can

you listen to what I am going to say, or would you prefer me to leave you alone until daybreak? I can not remain here long; my adversary was killed without a witness, and a murder is punished by death.

Julia. What are you going to say to me?

Mariani. Can you support the sight of me?

Julia. Speak.

Mariani (*taking a seat*). Search your memory well; there is one way you can live in peace for some months, perhaps some years, until your family are willing to pardon you and receive you back again.

Julia. When the Appianis pardon the brooks will change their courses.

Mariani. I leave you this house, which is mine. You can remain here under whatever name you choose; I dwelt here in solitude, and perhaps no one would know that this poor lodging had changed owners.

Julia. And you?

Mariani. I? Why I am a man, and a man can make his living with his hands. If you are driven from your family, and irrevocably deprived of your money, you will have enough to live on here. If you are ever rich again, you can pay me back.

Julia. I also have hands, and I can work for my living.

Mariani. Take care not to be too proud.

Julia. Take care of that yourself.

Mariani. Have I reasoned too quickly?

Julia. No.

(*She walks with long steps.*)

Mariani. At this season the nights are short. See the light appearing in the east. In one hour I must leave Rome.

Julia. Your country, Mariani.

Mariani. This is not my country. I am a Venetian. Stay; it will be ten years on Assumption day that I entered this beautiful city on a night like this. The morning glow appeared as it does now behind these hills. I took with me this instrument. I was young, joyous, and sure of success. I had nothing. Everything I possess I have worked for since that day. Now I shall return to my dear Venice as a traveling singer; and if my good genius is too cowardly to follow me, I shall die for the cause of freedom in Italy.

Julia. You are brave, but foolish.

Mariani. I beg you to accept.

(*He kneels.*)

Julia. But what name shall I assume here?

Mariani. A plebeian name; that would be a protection.

Julia. I shall pass for an adventurer. How can I prevent people from finding out who I am as soon as they begin to look for me? If I take no interest in anything, if I know no one,

no one will take my part, and I shall be put in prison by my parents or by the police.

Mariani. I shall tell you how to obviate that . . . I fear you will refuse me.

Julia. What is it?

Mariani. I shall tell you later. Now permit me to make my arrangements to leave.

(*He moves off.*)

Julia (*alone*). Art thou foolish, thou also, my heart? What art thou dreaming? This man is reeking with the blood of thy brother.

(*She kneels and prays.*)

Mariani (*reentering*). Be calm, I pray you: here, by yourself, who can I leave to serve you? You also need a name that will vouch for you. I offer you mine.

Julia. Your name?

Mariani. It is not noble, but it has had no stain—at least until to-day. My father was a jeweler in Venice; he was ruined by a shipwreck. I have a brother who is rich; he is a merchant in Bassora. My family is not a great one; nevertheless, when my father's father dies, my brother will fill a high position in the army.

Julia. It is your name, Mariani, that is too noble for me.

Mariani. I felt sure you would refuse it; and still, I must leave you.

Julia. No, no!

Mariani. Do you object to bearing the name

of an assassin? Think that, if I do not leave, I shall change my rôle to-morrow and become a victim.

Julia. And how can I repay you?

Mariani. By leaving with me a remembrance which will follow me like a faithful sister into the most far-off countries.

Julia. You are young, Mariani, and the day when you fall in love . . . Do not close your heart foolishly. What would you say then?

Mariani. I would say that I gave my name to a woman who is separated from me by the deep seas, and that I have done with the world.

Julia. But you do not know me.

Mariani. Answer me; I must be off.

Julia. Enter this room; take a small box I brought with me; it contains some diamonds; I give them to you.

Mariani. I accept.

(*He leaves. A voice from without.*)

I tell you it is here; I recognize the door.

(*Knocking.*)

Julia (*opening the door*). It is you!

(*Enter Fiorasanta.*)

The Abbé. Yes, beautiful Julia, it is I. I have heard the sad news of the death of count Appiani. Do you know what I have done? I have confessed everything to my uncle, the cardinal.

Julia. How?

The Abbé. How! Everything is propitious; he consents to pay His Holiness all that is necessary to procure our pardon; he only stipulates that we leave the city for a time. We shall go to Naples, where I shall leave the religious order and marry you. My uncle, the cardinal, has written to your mother asking her to hush up the matter, and he asked her for your hand, in my behalf; she replied that your brother, in dying, requested that you might be pardoned for running away. The last moments of this man, usually so inexorable, were consecrated by a prayer he made for you and for himself. You do not answer me! I have brought with me your porters, who, if you wish, will conduct you to your palace, where my uncle, the Cardinal, has gone; that is, if you do not say you would prefer being taken somewhere else.

(*Mariani comes in.*)

Julia. Mariani, my mother has pardoned me.

The Abbé. Sir, I thank you for all the care you have taken, and I beg you to come with me. My uncle, the Cardinal, will not leave your services unrewarded.

Julia. Listen, Mariani; I want you to swear that you will grant me what I ask.

Mariani. I swear it.

Julia. On your word and honor?

Mariani. Yes.

Julia. My name is Julia, countess of Appi-

ani. I am a pupil of Cardinal Grimani, who has willed me his property on his death; I want my name stricken out of this will and yours written in its place. Now take this ring (*she cuts off a lock of hair*) and put this in it.

(*She orders the door opened and gets into her chaise.*)

The Abbé. Where shall I tell these porters to take you, madame?

Julia. To the Sisters of the Visitation. Wait, tell my mother that I have taken the veil.

This dramatic sketch was written for the *Dédication,* a publication consisting of twelve articles by twelve different writers (Paris, 1837).

FAUSTINE

FRAGMENTS

CHARACTERS

LORÉDAN, *a Venetian Nobleman.*
FABRICE, } *his Sons.*
MICHEL, }
GALÉAS VISCONTI, *a Milanese Nobleman.*
ORSO, *a Jeweler.*
FAUSTINE, *Daughter of Lorédan.*
NINA, *a Follower of Faustine.*

ACT THE FIRST

SCENE I

(*Michel, alone, then Fabrice.*)

Michel. I have watched more than once during this long war, but never to my knowledge have I passed a night like this. Day begins to dawn. The bell of Saint Maurice will soon ring for sunrise. Is it possible that she will not return! Ah! here you are, Fabrice! and it is quite time.

Fabrice. Yes, indeed, and how exhausted I am. Ah! how tired!

(*He puts on his cloak.*)

Michel. You are no doubt returning from a ball? Have you played cards to-night?

Fabrice. Yes, and I should say, as good luck would have it, I was greatly entertained. The most charming music, the most beautiful women

in Venice! But what are you doing here so early in the morning? You do not look like a man who has just arisen—and these expiring torches with their feeble light, your tired eyes. . . . What ails you?

Michel. And so it seems the elder members of a family must watch over the honor of their house while the children amuse themselves.

Fabrice. The honor of the house, did you say? What does that mean?

Michel. You are very young. Can you keep a secret?

Fabrice. Ah! my brother, I bear the same name as you.

Michel. Swear, then, by this name, and that of our mother who is no more, that you will never tell what I am about to confide to you.

Fabrice. Be it so, I swear. But what a forbidding voice. . . .

Michel. Look at this door.

Fabrice. The door to our sister's room? Why is it open at this hour?

Michel. Enter if you wish—you will not awaken any one.

Fabrice. She has just gone out?

Michel. Not *just* gone out.

Fabrice. When then? and why?

Michel. I am waiting here especially to ask her that question.

Fabrice. And how long have you been here?

Michel. Since last evening. Are you surprised?

Fabrice. Explain things. You make me shudder.

Michel. I can say no more; I know no more than you do. Look and think.

Fabrice. Truly I can do neither. Notwithstanding what I have seen with my own eyes, some suspicions, some thoughts, are so terrible, so unlooked for, that one recoils frightened before believing them.

Michel. Yes, indeed. This is precisely what I felt as I passed her door last night, at midnight.

Fabrice. You are alone?

Michel. Yes, I returned from the arsenal.

Fabrice. Was our father asleep?

Michel. He had been asleep for a long time.

Fabrice. Had Nina retired?

Michel. I believe so.

Fabrice. Just Heaven!

(*He walks up and down for some time silently.*)

Michel (*seated*). What are you thinking about?

Fabrice. What are you thinking about; Nina told me that our sister sometimes arises and walks in her sleep.

Michel. Nonsense! I do not lay much stress on nurses' tales.

Fabrice. What are you thinking of? You dare not say . . .

Michel. I dare say it to her face.

Fabrice. No, by the living God! While I preserve the sentiment of my own honor, I can never, for one moment, think that my sister would cease to respect hers. It is impossible for me even to doubt. . . . I am of the opposite opinion, I do not believe it as you do.

Michel. Neither do I.

Fabrice. Who is there then to say anything? Evidently this is an inexplicable mystery. I can not fathom it any more than you can. Her disappearance, her empty room, chance that holds you here as witness, I acknowledge is difficult to understand. But it is still more difficult to imagine that a daughter of Lorédan, after having lived a blameless life under the ancestral roof for twenty years, would suddenly lose her senses.

Michel. That is not what I suspect her of doing.

Fabrice. Of what, then? Suppose she has a lover unknown to us. How can I tell? Does not some passion hidden in the depth of her soul (for you think her capable of it) cause her to trample under foot the loyalty, honor, modesty, and dignity of her station?

Michel. You think, perhaps . . .

Fabrice. No, I think nothing. She is our sister. She is a Lorédan. She resembles our

mother. As long as I have no proof of it, as long as I do not hear from her own lips of her crime and her disgrace, I shall say, No! it is impossible.

Michel. The Marquis Visconti, cousin of the duke of Milan, is expected to arrive this very day.

Fabrice. Ah! Well?

Michel. Our sister is affianced to him.

Fabrice. I know it, and I am convinced . .

Michel. That this marriage will take place?

Fabrice. Without a doubt, and that very shortly. When things are once more explained you will bitterly regret your suspicion.

Michel. What have I said to you?

Fabrice. Everything that silence can infer.

Michel. Listen to me then while I speak. You are quick, prompt, always in a hurry, like people who have nothing to do. You form your decisions quickly, fearing to reflect, but I have been seated in this armchair since last evening, and I have counted the hours. Remember this: Faustine's absence is either a sin or a ruse.

Fabrice. A ruse, did you say, for what end?

Michel. For the plain and simple purpose of breaking off this alliance.

Fabrice. This dishonorable method is a fine way of doing it!

Michel. She knows very well she should not do it in this way. She knows very well that we

would all rather lose our fortune and our lives than see our dishonor published abroad. She knows very well that no one in this house would in that case tell our father, for it would kill him, —the old man who loves his idolized child better than anything besides his money. She thinks she can do as she pleases with impunity, or if called to account in a quiet way, do you not imagine she is sufficiently subtle to tell a lie, or make an excuse. That is not what troubles her; but what she wishes, what she hopes, is that this will create a dreadful scandal, and that her flight will be found out, so that without divining, or even attempting to state the cause, the fact can not be ignored, and so her hand can not be given.

Fabrice. What a strange fancy! Does she hate Visconti or love another man?

Michel. Who knows?

Fabrice. Pure imagination, I tell you.

Michel. Not as imaginary as you may suppose. I know the Venetian women; I have studied them in their true light. I am not in the least astonished that Faustine has fled without thinking where she was going, simply for the reason I have told you.

Fabrice. Then you think she will return?

Michel. She must. If she wants a scandal, she can have one in this palace, before us two, and not elsewhere.

Fabrice. Let us suppose that you are mis-

taken, and that there is no truth in any of these surmises. (*A bell is heard.*) Listen, it is sunrise! Do you think she will return now?

Michel (*at the window*). You are right, it is too late, the palace is full of people. But where is she? What does it mean? If I am mistaken in accusing her of duplicity, she must be far more capable, and by my patron saint the archangel, I would not . . .

Fabrice. You would not lay your hands on her, I think. . . . Did you not speak of our father just now? Do you wish to be the murderer of your sister?

Michel. Yes, if it were true that a deceiver . . .

Fabrice. Ah! as for that, do not speak of that. . . . Such a thing is impossible. . .

Michel. What will you do?

Fabrice. You ask me what?

Michel. I have good cause to be angry, have I not?

Fabrice. Silence! Silence! I hear steps; the sound comes from this side. . . . Perhaps it is Faustine? . . . No, it is our father. . . . May God watch over her now!

(*He shuts the door, which was partly open.*)

Scene II

(*The same as before and Lorédan.*)

Lorédan. Both of you up so early, my children! That is well. . . . Nothing strange in that as far as Michel is concerned.

(*To Fabrice.*)

As for you, I know your wiles. You do not deserve much credit for being up at this hour. You turn night into day. You are fond of attending masquerades. . . .

Fabrice. My father . . .

Lorédan. Yes, you are squandering your mother's fortune; that amuses you, but look out for the future! Old as I am I can compel you to listen to me.

Fabrice. Oh, my father, what a bad opinion you have formed!

Lorédan. It is true, it is just. I know your heart, but when I see you so gaily dressed, covered with brilliant trinkets . . . You laugh at our sumptuary laws. . . . Some day we will let you play the fine gentleman. Well, no more scolding. I am going to be merry to-day, for I have some very good news. . . . But what is the matter, Michel? You look very sad.

Michel. Your pardon, sir. . . . How are you? You are up very early to-day.

Lorédan. An old habit, my dear friend, an old habit that comes from being a merchant; for even if I am no longer allowed to call myself one, thanks to their absurd interdiction, I am, and always will, consider myself one. . . . What a foolish and useless idea it is to try to prevent us! And it is at this time of the morning that the letters are received and the accounts balanced.

Fabrice. And so you defy the laws?

Lorédan. Ah! ah! my boy, that makes you laugh! If I defy them, at least it is not for nonsense. Truly, there is no one in Venice prouder of his name than I of mine; I venture to say no one is better entitled to it. But, for that reason, can it be said that an honest man, no matter how high his rank, can not work for money? They will never be able to cure me of that idea. I am a patrician to the marrow of my bones, but I am a banker to the depth of my heart, and as I have lived so I shall die. . . . Is your sister Faustine not up yet?

Fabrice. We have not seen her, sir. . . .

(*In an undertone to Michel.*)

I tremble lest she will not come.

Michel (*in an undertone*). Do not look for her now. It is too late. If she intends to return, her tale is prepared.

Lorédan. The news of which I have told you will be especially interesting to her. My chil-

dren, you know that the marquis Galéas Visconti is on his way here to become my son-in-law. He comes from Milan. He stopped a few days in Verona, to take possession of the city in the name of his cousin, and I look for him any moment, for I do not wish him to lodge elsewhere than in this palace. Well, do you know what has happened? It is not a small affair for a house such as ours to ally itself to the duke of Milan, and his most noble lordship is easily offended on like occasions. He does not care to see a family rise in that way, in the midst of his domains, rise higher than the highest, by connecting itself with a foreign prince. He fears that this old pillar will grow too large and shatter the edifice, and this is the reason the senate is so disturbed about it.

Michel. Ah, well, sir; has the senate come to any conclusion?

Lorédan. Ah, well, my son, it has resolved, after much deliberation, that the republic adopt my daughter, and, as princess, give, with her hand, a considerable dot to this worthy and charming marquis.

Fabrice. Really!

Lorédan. That is a settled fact; I have here a note from our friend Cornaro, who asked the privilege of telling me. I do not now know precisely the amount, but the word in the letter is "considerable." No doubt the republic will have

its reward, for it is a good mother, but also an economical housewife. Between ourselves, I think there is a likelihood of a treaty with Milan, at the expense of the sieur de Padua, and the keys of some small cities near the Treviso frontier can easily be dropped in among the wedding presents. . . . Ah! ah! these proud Morosinis with their princess of Hungary; they will not be the only family whose daughter is adopted by the state.

Michel. I am always alarmed when I hear my dear father speak in this way in regard to affairs of state.

Lorédan. Good! So you have scruples. A soldier; this becomes you well! Has Charles Zeno—your captain—taught you to be so prudent?

Michel. Because I am a soldier is why I have been taught that it is better to act . . .

Lorédan. Than to speak? That is the advice given to me when I left the secret council. Besides, I know Venice, and I know that its walls have ears. . . .

Fabrice. Not here, my father, but . . .

Lorédan. Everywhere, everywhere! . . . I have seen the kind of people popularly called *ceux de là-haut* at their work. Venice is a silent city. One walks the streets followed by treachery disguised as a footman. I have suffered enough from this; I have kept quiet for sixty-five years;

but I am old now, I am weary, I am tired of it all. I do not divulge the secrets of the state, for the good reason that I do not know them; but I have been a senator, I have corrected the laws, been councilor, philosopher and it is quite time for me to be my true self, and if I am loquacious in my old age . . .

Michel. Treachery never grows old.

Lorédan. Men at my age, sir, only fear God. . . . But who comes here? What is this noise?

Scene III

(*The same as before, a Valet.*)

The Valet. Marquis Visconti has just landed in front of the palace.

Lorédan. God be praised! . . . Let us go to meet him.

Michel. What are you thinking of, my father, that you wish to go to meet him yourself? It is his place to come to us. Go into your apartment.

Lorédan. Is it the fashion in these days for the children to tell their father what to do? Plague on your ceremonies! I shall do as you wish, to oblige you.

Scene IV

(*Lorédan, alone, then Nina.*)

Lorédan. I truly think that these children order me about like a schoolboy. . . Hum! in fact, it pleases me to see in them this lofty pride, this fire that belongs to my family. . . . Let us take care that all this does not cause us to neglect our business. I must present Visconti to the Doge . . . the Doge! . . . How low is this title—once so high—degraded? This poor man to whom I shall present my son-in-law would not have the right to offer him his daughter in marriage. The tribunal of the forty would oppose it. Thus our all-powerful aristocracy spreads like a forest that covers everything with its shade. Contarini! you are the first Doge over whom a thankful country pronounced a funeral oration: you are the last one who will be called seigneur! By my patron saint! if the electors were inadvertently to offer to put that pitiable gilded cap on my head, I would do like Tiepolo, run away to escape ruling. Just to see how Urseolo, in despair at being appointed Doge of Venice, became a monk at Perpignan. . . . But what did his lazy successor do?

(*He calls.*)

Nina, Nina!

Nina. Here I am, sir.

Lorédan. Is my daughter not up yet?

Nina. She has not called me, sir.

Lorédan. Go see to her! . . . Nina, Nina! tell her that the marquis . . . that her future husband . . . No, do not tell her anything . . . but take pains to make her look beautiful.

Nina. Yes, sir.

(*She enters Faustine's room.*)

Lorédan. It seems to me that they are very long disembarking. Doubtless there are many formalities to go through with. . . . Still Michel is not much given to formality. . . . They have told me that I am in a great hurry to have my daughter seen this morning. . . . They say that is not etiquette. . . . Away with etiquette! Is her beauty to be unappreciated? Yes, I shall give her some jewels. . .

(*He calls.*)

Pippo! . . . Jewels enhance youthful beauty, and their reflection catches the eye. . . Our neighbor, Orso, the silversmith, will let me have some cheap. I must procure some. . . . Pippo! Pippo! . . . Ah! here comes our *fiancé.*

Scene V

(*Lorédan, Fabrice, Michel, Visconti, Suite.*)

Visconti. It is your fault, sir, if I am importunate. You were not willing for me to see anything in this city that I love so well before I met some one that I loved better.

Lorédan. Be welcome, marquis. Put your hand in mine, just as though it were the paw of the Lion of Saint Mark himself. You are right in loving your friend.

Visconti. With all my heart. . . . Never was the Lion of Saint Mark more powerful than now. While he exterminates the Genoese at your doors, his flag-ships abound in every sea, and even if he is motionless, every one knows that he has ships.

Lorédan. You know that the best compliment that can be paid a Venetian is to speak well of Venice. . . . Ah, so tell me, are you tired? You have traveled here by night?

Visconti. Yes, short as was the distance, I enjoyed the fresh night air. . . . I know it is not customary to think as I do, that the sun and dust spoil the most beautiful route.

Lorédan. In fact, they are very annoying.

Visconti. And by bright moonlight our beautiful Italy sleeping seems to me even more beautiful that when awake.

Lorédan. I have noticed that, and also that at night the attendants make better time; in daylight they stop at every little village, while in darkness fear spurs them on.

Michel. Fear, sir?

Lorédan. Ah! yes, fear . . . of robbers, specters, what can I tell? of the will-o'-the-wisp that dances on the brooks by night. . . . You do not know what it is. (*Designating Michel.*) He will not acknowledge that there is such a thing as fear.

Visconti. He must have seen it under his very eyes . . . before him . . . during this war.

Michel. No, marquis, the only thing that can be said against the Genoese is that they were conquered.

Lorédan. Here is the other worthless fellow (*designating Fabrice*); he does not fear the night either, but he is very much afraid of the *Seigneurs de la nuit.* . . . He is very glad that Barratieri has conceived the happy idea of establishing the rule of the dice-box among us. . . . Wretched boy! . . . You see him, marquis! I am posting you in the small family secrets, so that you will not be deceived when you take your place in it.

Visconti. The most humble person related to you will always be the highest in my eyes.

Lorédan. May our plan be successful, you

will not have the worst of it. My dear Faustine, seigneur Visconti . . .

Michel (*in a low voice to Lorédan*). My father. . . .

Lorédan. I prefer not to speak of her. . . I knew quite well that Michel would not like to hear me praise her; it would be unbecoming in a father to eulogize the daughter who is the consolation and the joy of his old age. Do you not agree with me, marquis?

Visconti. No, sir; to speak plainly, I think quite the opposite; if speaking of a royal princess even, the paternal benediction seems to me the most beautiful crown that a young girl can wear on her head.

Lorédan. We understand each other, I see, and both of us run a risk of being scolded. . . You shall see my daughter; I have asked her to come at once.

Fabrice. Sir, I fear that it is not possible . . . just now. . . .

Lorédan. What? Why not?

Visconti. Permit me to retire, lest I am intruding.

Lorédan. What is the matter? Is she ill? I have just seen Nina and she said nothing. Fabrice, answer me; you make me uneasy. Is there any reason that I do not know? . . .

Fabrice (*in a low tone to Michel*). What will happen?

Michel (*also in a low tone*). How do you expect me to know?

Lorédan. Ah, well! You do not explain this? What does this mean? Excuse me, marquis, but I am going to find out.

(*He is just entering Faustine's apartments when he stops, on seeing her before him.*)

Ah! What are you dreaming about? Here she is, herself.

Scene VI

(*Same as before. Faustine.*)

Lorédan. My daughter, here is seigneur Visconti, who has just come from the army. He does us the honor of being our guest in the palace. He is now resting after the fatigues of the war.

Visconti. My life has been very hazardous, madame, and if some of my experiences have been hard, some have been happy, since one of them permits me to kneel at your feet.

Faustine. You have come from Milan, sir. How is princess Valentine?

Visconti. She has left us forever. We have given up hope of ever seeing her again; she will remain duchess of Orleans.

Faustine. I know why, seigneur!

Visconti. She is rather sad.

Faustine. That is so: she is sad, but bears up under her trouble.

Visconti. She grieves because her heart is broken.

Faustine. She bears her suffering bravely.

Visconti. Nevertheless, her friends would like to see her different.

Faustine. Are you sure they are her friends?

Visconti. I consider myself one of those who care most for her.

Faustine. And I also, even if I am some distance from her.

Visconti. I know it, madame; it would give me pleasure if the name of my dear cousin would recommend me to you.

Faustine. Your own name is sufficient introduction to give you a welcome everywhere.

Fabrice (*in low tone, to Michel*). Have you deceived me, or were you mistaken yourself?

Lorédan (*apart*). It seems to me she gives him a very dismal welcome.

(*Aloud.*)

Marquis, I must conduct you to the apartment prepared for you.

Visconti. I do not wish . . .

Lorédan. Come, I pray you.

(*Apart.*)

The matter of the dowry will change his mood.

(*Aloud.*)

Marquis, I shall show you the way.

(*He goes out with Visconti.*)

Michel (*in low tone to Faustine*). Sister, I wish to speak to you.

Faustine. When you wish.

Michel. Right away.

Faustine. As you wish.

Michel (*in a low tone to Fabrice*). Fabrice, leave me alone with her!

Fabrice (*in a low tone to Michel*). Spare her.

(*He goes out.*)

Scene VII

(*Michel, Faustine.*)

Michel. Last night the admiral sent for me. There was a false alarm, some fires were lighted at Chiozza. After having visited the posts, I returned, and on entering I pushed open the door of this hall, when the wind, which was blowing a gale, blew open the door in front of me. I advanced thinking that I should find old Nina still up. Seeing no one I called Faustine: the echo from the arches alone answered me, and the light from the torch I carried in my hand showed me every corner of the deserted apartment. Then I lighted these torches, and sat down in this armchair. . . . Where could Faustine be?

Faustine. God knows where.

Michel. Dear little sister, I watched long

last night. Are you quite satisfied that I have been patient?

Faustine. I can rely on you.

Michel. Patience and hate both work slowly; but anger and revenge are prompt. My name is Michel Lorédan.

Faustine. And my name is Faustine. On whom would you be revenged?

Michel. If I know the man, my revenge would have been taken.

Faustine. You shall not know him.

Michel. To-morrow, if I wish.

Faustine. No, for I am going to tell you now all that you are to know. The family wish to give me in marriage and I have a husband.

Michel. Really! . . . That is your lie? And so you have been secretly married?

Faustine. Yes, the family wished to give me in marriage and to make that impossible I have uttered one of those vows that decide our lives and even follow us into the tomb.

Michel. Very well; that is just like you. And your brother may not be permitted to know the name you bear?

Faustine. Not now.

Michel. Really! And what will you reply to my father when he gives you a husband?

Faustine. Nothing, for I count on you to prevent him.

Michel. Better and better. And if I refuse

to do this for you? You are very daring to confide your secret to me; do you not know . . .

Faustine. I know to whom I speak, my brother, and I have no anxiety about what I have said.

Michel. But, finally: suppose I refuse?

Faustine. You will be the cause of great unhappiness.

Michel. I was not mistaken in the least, for I knew beforehand every word you said. And so you are not afraid, by your audacious schemes, to play with our peace of mind, and the gray hairs of our father?

Faustine. I thought that you would respect them.

Michel. Doubtless; and you have made use of this sacred respect, this reverence a daughter should have for a father, as an instrument, as a cipher in your calculations. It is unfortunate that I had time to contemplate last night; if your dissembling might only have been foreseen, and this marriage that you have imagined in order to be exempt from obeying . . .

Faustine. Imagined, my brother?

Michel. Yes, my sister, we thought as much.

Faustine. Imagined! . . . See the ring. . . .

(*She shows him a ring on her finger.*)

Michel. If its duplicate exists, unhappy be the hand that wears it!

Faustine. Did you say unhappy?

Michel. Unhappy and dead! But this must all be a joke, an absurd lie.

Faustine. Michel, I love and I am loved.

Michel. No, no!

Faustine. I love and I am loved! If you do not think I speak from my heart, it is because—it is because you have never felt your own vibrate.

Michel. Swear.

Faustine. I have already sworn.

Michel. Unhappy girl! Can this be possible?

(*A moment of silence.*)

But, if this is true, why hide his name?

Faustine. Because I must at present.

Michel. At present! If it is not fear, it is shame that prevents you from telling? . . . Is he a patrician?

Faustine. Perhaps.

Michel. No, he can not be. Any one can see that.

Faustine. And if he is not a patrician?

Michel. What can he be then? You do not answer. . . .

(*He draws near her.*)

Is it true, Faustine? And so the dreadful suspicion that I scarcely dared imagine is true?

Faustine. What suspicion?

Michel. That, in one day, in one moment,

you have forgotten who we are! that you have acted dishonorably!

Faustine. Whose honor are you referring to; to mine, my brother?

Michel. The honor of the entire family. Honor, Faustine, this sacred barrier, this treasure buried under the threshold of the family, you trampled upon when you left this house. When this house in which we live shall be no longer a palace, when it shall be used as the dwelling for the poor—honor applies to the rich as well as to the poor—the blot that the ragged daughter of a fisherman would not make, the daughter of Lorédan tries to make in the Golden Book opposite her name.

Faustine. If you respect this name as much as you seem to, you would not begin by insulting your sister. Have you fully comprehended what she told you? I repeat what I have said: I love and I am loved. Yesterday I learned that Visconti had arrived, and that I was to be given to another instead of him to whom my life belonged. I did not fear your anger any more than I did the arrival of the Visconti, any more than I did your designs of making a shroud for my wedding-dress. What I do fear is what my father will say, his just and cold reasoning, strengthened by so many years of experience, strengthened still more by his love of me. Who knows? perhaps a prayer, a tear I shed as I bend

over his gray head, will be my defense. Do you call it forfeiting honor to be true to one's sworn word? Your honor is recognized everywhere, in the house, in the palace, in the senate, in the street, on the sea, and at war! You wear it on the edge of your sword, while we women wear it in the depths of our souls. We can do no more than love, we can be no more than be faithful. I am not a wife, but I am affianced. I have not acted dishonorably; I was afraid of doing wrong by loving, and I call God to witness.

Michel. A love unworthy of you!

Faustine. Ah! how can you tell! I did not say he was not a patrician. If I was wrong in not consulting you, is it a proof that I do not know how to choose? If I am not permitted to tell the name of my husband now, what authority have you for saying that he is unworthy? And if I have inspired love in any one, am I so ugly, my brother, that one of our great lords may not have fancied me? But, be he a noble or an adventurer, is there not some place at the farthermost end of the Adriatic where during the war prerogatives are effaced, where the rank of birth can be forgotten in death?

Michel. Is he a soldier?

Faustine. Perhaps. You spoke of a blot made in the Golden Book; if blood shed for one's country can be called a blot, you are right.

Michel. Is that the oath you have taken.

Faustine. Yes, before God.

Michel. God does not recognize oaths sworn by chance by a rebellious girl.

Faustine. Do you call oaths sworn at the foot of the altar chance oaths?

Michel. Yes: your oath sworn without our consent is null in law.

Faustine. At this moment, when we are talking, my oath is written in heaven.

Michel. This hand shall do its utmost to efface it on this earth.

Faustine (*exposing her breast*). Efface my oath then, it is here!

Michel. You dare me! But, thanks be to heaven, it is not only there. Is all this good fortune that you pretend to hide from me, something that it would give me pleasure to hear? It would be better to tell me, as good for you as for . . . the other.

Faustine. And what would you do were I to tell you?

Michel. I would kill him.

Faustine. No. . . . You would assassinate him.

Michel. Perhaps I would not even take that trouble.

Faustine. But, my brother, I have not told you that he was not a patrician.

Michel. What?

Faustine. No: I did not say so. You became

angry at once and so could not reflect as you ought. You are too hasty, your temper gets the better of you.

Michel. If you dare to trifle with me, deceitful Venetian, I shall tear off your mask.

Faustine. I do not believe it.

Michel. We shall see.

Faustine. Try.

1851.

A SUPPER AT THE HOUSE OF MADEMOISELLE RACHEL

[illegible]

To Madame ——

First of all, let me thank you, madame and dear godmother, for the letter you sent me written by the charming Paulita.* It is a remarkably well-written letter; but what shall I say of you who always find an opportunity to send a little happiness to those you love? You are the only human being I know thus constituted.

A kindness is never lost; in reply to your letter from Desdemona, I shall narrate to you *un souper chez* Mademoiselle Rachel, that will amuse you, if we both think alike, and if you still share my admiration for this wonderful girl. My little tale is for your eyes alone, first of all because the noble *enfant* deteste being talked about, and also because, since I have been so often to her house, many foolish remarks have been made, and there has been so much gossip that I have made up my mind not to even say that I have seen her play at the Theater Français.

This evening *Tancrède* was played, and be-

* Mademoiselle Pauline Garcia.

Supper at Mlle. Rachel's.

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(1839)

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This evening *Tancred* was played, and be-

* Mademoiselle Pauline Garcia.

tween the acts I complimented her on her costume, which was charming. In the fifth act she read her letter more touchingly, and in a deeper tone than ever; she told me that while reading it she wept, and was so greatly affected that she was forced to stop. At ten o'clock, when the theater * was out, I chanced to meet her in the galleries of the Palais-Royal, leaning on the arm of Félix Bonnaire, and followed by a train of young women, among whom were Mademoiselle Rabut, Mademoiselle Dubois, of the Conservatory, etc. I spoke to her, and she said: "I want you to take supper with me."

When we arrived at her house,† Bonnaire disappeared, sad and angry at this meeting. Rachel smiled at his piteous departure. We friends of these young ladies entered and sat down, each man alongside of his favorite, and I by the side of the dear Fanfan. After a few remarks, Rachel recollected that she had left her rings and her bracelets at the theater, and she sent her maid to look for them. So then there was no servant to prepare the supper! But Rachel then arose, removed her dress and went into the kitchen. Fifteen minutes later she entered the room in which we were sitting, wearing a dressing-gown and a nightcap with strings tied under her ear;

* The play began at eight o'clock, and scarcely lasted more than an hour and a half.

† Mademoiselle Rachel then lived on Véro-Dodat road.

she was as pretty as an angel, as she held a plate containing three beefsteaks that she had cooked herself. She put the plate down in the center of the table, saying to us, "Help yourselves"; then she returned to the kitchen, and came back holding in one hand a soup-tureen full of hot bouillon and in the other a saucepan full of spinach. This was the supper! There were no plates, no spoons, the maid having taken the keys with her. Rachel opened a buffet, and found a salad-bowl full of salad, took the wooden fork, unearthed a plate, and began to eat by herself.

"But," said her mother, who was hungry, "there are some tin knives, forks, plates, etc., in the kitchen."

Rachel looked for them, found them, and distributed them among the company. And now began the following conversation, in which you can readily see that I have changed nothing.

The Mother. My dear, your beefsteaks are overdone.

Rachel. So they are: they are as hard as a stone. When I did the housework I was a better cook than now. I have one talent less. Ah! well! I have lost in one way to gain in another. . . . Sarah, you don't eat anything?

Sarah. No, I can't eat with tin knives and forks.

Rachel. Oh! it has only been since I saved some money and bought a dozen silver knives

and forks that you can not use the tin ones. When I am richer you will soon want a servant behind your chair and another one in front.

(*Showing her fork.*)

I shall never throw away these tin knives and forks. We have used them too long. Is that not so, mamma?

The Mother (*with her mouth full*). What a child she is!

Rachel (*speaking to me*). Can you imagine that when I played at the Moliére theater I only had two pairs of stockings, and that every morning . . .

Here her sister Sarah began to jabber German to prevent her sister from continuing.

Rachel (*continuing*). Let us have no German here! There is no harm in saying this. I had at that time but two pairs of stockings, and I was obliged to wash one pair every morning, so as to have them to wear in the evening. One pair was hung on a string to dry in my room, while I wore the other.

Myself. And you kept house?

Rachel. I arose at six o'clock every day, and by eight o'clock all the beds were made. Then I went to market to buy the dinner.

Myself. And did you keep some of the money, as the servants do?

Rachel. No. I was an honest cook; is that not so, mamma?

The Mother (*still eating*). Oh, that is true.

Rachel. Only once I stole for a whole month. When I bought anything for four cents I charged five, and when I paid out ten cents I charged the family eleven. At the end of the month I possessed three francs.

Myself (*severely*). And what did you do with these three francs, mademoiselle?

The Mother (*perceiving that Rachel said nothing*). Sir, she bought Molière's works with it.

Myself. Really!

Rachel. Yes, certainly. I had a Corneille and a Racine, and I wanted a Molière. I bought it with my three francs, and then I confessed my crime. . . . Why is Mademoiselle Rabut going? Good evening, mademoiselle.

Three-quarters of the bores are bored like Mademoiselle Rabut. The servant returned, bringing the rings and bracelets that had been forgotten. They were placed on the table; the two bracelets are exceedingly beautiful: they are at least worth four or five thousand francs. With them was a priceless gold crown. They were all on the table with the salad, the spinach, and the tin spoons. During this conversation I had been thinking of how she kept house, and made the beds, and of the wear and tear of a life on small means, and I looked at Rachel's hands fearing that they might be ugly or out of shape. They

were small, white, plump, and tapered like a bobbin. They were the hands of a princess.

Sarah, who ate nothing, continued to scold in German. Let me say, that that morning she had done something, I do not know what, that did not meet her mother's approval, and that it was due to the repeated petitions of her sister that she owed her pardon and her place at table.

Rachel (*replying to these German remarks*). You tire me. I prefer speaking of my past life unaided. I remember one day I wanted to make some punch in one of these tin spoons. I put my spoon over the candle, and it melted in my hand. To the point, Sophie! give me some kirsch. We shall make some punch. Oh! how good it is: I have finished my supper.

(*The cook brought a bottle.*)

The Mother. Sophie has made a mistake. This is a bottle of absinthe.

Myself. Give me some.

Rachel. Oh! I shall be so glad if you will take something at our house!

The Mother. Absinthe is said to be very wholesome.

Myself. Not at all. It is both unhealthy and detestable.

Sarah. Then why do you ask for some?

Myself. So that I can say that I have tasted something here.

Rachel. I want to drink some.

She poured a little absinthe into a glass of water and drank. A silver bowl was brought her into which she put some sugar and kirsch; then she set her punch afire.

Rachel. I love this blue flame.

Myself. It is much prettier when there are no lights in the room.

Rachel. Sophie, take out the candles.

The Mother. Never, never. What an idea!

Rachel. They are intolerable! . . . Pardon, mamma, you are good, you are charming (*she embraces her*); but I want Sophie to remove the candles.

One of the gentlemen took the two candles and put them under the table.—Twilight effect.—The mother, by turns green and blue by the light from the blazing punch, turned her eyes on me and observed my every movement. The candles reappeared.

A Flatterer. Mademoiselle Rabut was not pretty this evening.

Myself. You are hard to please; I thought her quite pretty.

Another Flatterer. She is not intelligent.

Rachel. Why do you say that? She is not so stupid as many others, and she is a good girl. Let her alone. I do not like to hear my comrades spoken of in this way.

The punch being ready, Rachel filled the glasses and passed it to every one; then she poured

the remainder of the punch into a deep plate, and began to drink it with a spoon; then she took my cane, withdrew the dagger from the interior, and picked her teeth with the point. Here ended the ordinary talk and the childish remarks. A word sufficed to change the character of the scene, and to introduce poetry and artistic feeling.

Myself. When you read this letter to-night, you were greatly moved.

Rachel. Yes; I felt as though something within me had given way. . . . But all the same, I do not care much for *Tancred.* It is not true to nature.

Myself. You prefer the plays of Corneille and Racine.

Rachel. I am very fond of Corneille; and although he is sometimes trivial and at other times bombastic—still, that is not the truth.

Myself. Oh! gently, mademoiselle.

Rachel. For example: in *Horace,* when Sabine says:

> A woman can change her lover, but she can not change her husband.

Well, I do not like that; it is vulgar.

Myself. You must at least acknowledge that it is true.

Rachel. Yes, but is it worthy of Corneille? Speak to me of Racine! I adore him. Everything he says is so beautiful, true, noble!

Myself. In regard to Racine, do you remember having received, a long time ago, an anonymous letter giving you advice in regard to the last scene in *Mithridates?*

Rachel. Perfectly; I followed the advice then given me, and from that day I have always been applauded in that scene. Do you know who wrote me that letter?

Myself. Yes, indeed; it was written by the woman who has the most wit and the smallest feet in Paris. . . . What rôle are you now studying?

Rachel. This summer we shall play *Mary Stuart,* and later *Polyeucte,* and perhaps . .

Myself. Well?

Rachel (*striking her fist on the table*). Well, I want to play *Phèdre.* People tell me I am too young, too thin, and a hundred other silly things. I answer them as follows: "It is Racine's best rôle, and I shall attempt to play it."

Sarah. My dear, perhaps you do wrong to undertake it.

Rachel. Let me be! If people find me too young, and the rôle not suited to me, well! I have had fault found with me when I played Roxane, and what harm did it do me? If I am said to be too thin, I maintain that it is nonsense. A woman with an infamous lover, who dies sooner than marry him; a woman who was consumed by fire and tears, such a woman should

not have a chest like Madame Paradol. That would be a mistake. I have read the rôle ten times within the last week; I do not know in what way I shall play it: but I tell you that I feel it. The newspapers are mistaken; it does not disgust me. They are at a loss to find something to annoy me, instead of aiding me, or encouraging me; but I shall play it, if only before an audience of four people.

(*Turning toward me.*)

Yes! I have read certain articles candidly and conscientiously written, and nothing has been better for me or more useful to me; but there are some people who use their pen to write lies, to destroy! those people are worse than robbers or assassins. They kill the mind with pin-pricks! Oh! I feel that I would like to poison them!

The Mother. My dear, you talk without stopping; you are tired. This morning you were up at six o'clock; I do not know what is the matter with you. You have chattered all day long, and have played to-night; you will make yourself ill.

Rachel (*vivaciously*). No; let me be. I say no! this is living.

(*Turning toward me.*)

Shall I get the book? We can read the play together.

Myself. Would I like it? . . . Why, you could not propose anything I would like better.

Sarah. But, my dear, it is half-past eleven.

Rachel. Well, who hinders you from going to bed?

In fact, Sarah went to bed. Rachel arose and left the room; in a moment she returned, holding the volume of Racine; her bearing and her step expressed an indefinable something solemn and religious, like that of a priest officiating at the altar, carrying the sacred vessels. She sat down by my side, and snuffed the candle. Her mother yawned and smiled.

Rachel (*opening the book with great respect, and bending over it*). How I love that man! When I am absorbed in that book I could go two days without eating or drinking.

Rachel and I began reading *Phèdre*, placing the book on the table beside us. Every one left. Rachel made a slight bow as they passed out, and continued reading. At first she recited in a monotone, like a litany. By degrees she became animated. We exchanged our observations and our ideas in regard to every passage. At length she stated her opinion. She stretched out her right hand on the table, her forehead leaning on her left hand, resting on her elbow, and gave vent to her feelings. Nevertheless, she only spoke as yet in an extremely low voice. All at once her eyes glistened—the genius of Racine lighted her face—she turned pale, she blushed. Never had I seen any one so beautiful, so interesting;

never had she produced such an effect on me at the theater.

Fatigue, a little hoarseness, the punch, and the lateness of the hour, an almost feverish glow in her little cheeks framed in a nightcap, and an indescribable charm surrounding her whole being, her brilliant eyes asking my opinion, her childish smile, lastly even the disarranged table, the candle with its flickering flame, the sleepy mother by our side, all these things made a picture worthy of Rembrandt, a chapter of a novel worthy of Wilhelm Meister, and a remembrance of artist life which will never be effaced from my memory.

In this way we passed the time until half after twelve. The father returned from the opera where he had gone to see Mademoiselle Nathan make her first appearance in the *Juive*. Scarcely was he seated, when he addressed one or two very rude words to his daughter, bidding her to stop reading. Rachel closed the book, saying, "It is revolting! I will get a light and read by myself in bed." I looked at her; great tears filled her eyes.

It was indeed revolting to see such a girl treated in this way! I arose, and left, filled with admiration, respect, and tenderness.

Returning home, I hasten to write to you, with the fidelity of a stenographer, all the details of this strange evening, thinking that you

will keep them, and that some day they will come to light.

The poet was not wrong in his surmises; this precious document was carefully preserved. Although the letter was not dated, and the envelope in which it was enclosed has been lost, the date is indicated by one of the circumstances of the narrative. Mademoiselle Nathan made her début in the opera, in the *Juive*, May 29, 1839, and the Théâtre Français having played *Tancred* the same evening, it is evident that the account of the supper was written the 29th or 30th of May. The various criticisms were not at that time unanimously in favor of the young actress. As is too often the case, the taste of the public was in advance of those who were supposed to direct it. Two months before the scene we have just read—Wednesday, March 27, 1839—Mademoiselle Rachel played the rôle of Roxane, having been twice interrupted by hisses. Jealousy was at its height. Notwithstanding the prompt justice of the public, the artist always remembered this stormy evening with sadness. Alfred de Musset had recently published two dissertations, in his best style, one on the recrudescence of tragedy, the other on the play of *Bajazet*. It is to these two articles and to the attacks of her detractors that Mademoiselle Rachel alludes in her excess of frank indignation against the newspapers.

After the supper, the poet and the young tragédienne became quite intimate. Alfred de Musset promised to write a tragedy in five acts for Mademoiselle Rachel, and he tried to find a subject in the tales of the time of the Merovingians, on which the learned Augustin Thierry had just thrown a new light. It was not by chance that he fixed upon the intrigues of Frédégonde at the court of Chilpéric. In the ambitious servant of the King of Neustrie we find the chief character in the picture of artist life, and of the chapter of Wilhelm Meister, that made such a deep impression on the poet. The

fragment of the tragedy of the *Servant du Roi,* written in July, 1839, is evidently connected with the picturesque episode of the supper. The approximate dates, the choice of subject, the title, all show the correlation of ideas between these two productions, notwithstanding the great difference in the treatment, and the distance that separates a faithful copy of real life from a work of art in the most severe style. This is often noticed in the life of great men; thus Leonardo da Vinci sometimes sketched his conception of his most imaginative and largest drawings on a marble table.

The plot of the *Servant du Roi* was never written; but *Gregoire de Tours, Augustin Thierry,* and *Sismonde* contain the main points. According to all probability, Frédégonde would have—in the first three acts—found her way into the house of Audovère, Chilpéric's first wife, who, by her coquetry and false modesty, gained the good graces and the heart of the king; she succeeded, through intrigue, in having the queen repudiated, and thought that she might almost seize the crown; then her hopes were frustrated by Chilpéric marrying a second wife, Galsuinde, so she returned the king's love and became the mistress of this feeble prince, and overwhelmed the new queen with contempt and humiliations. In the beginning of the fourth act Galsuinde resolved to flee secretly from the court and return to her father. Frédégonde, informed of this, deliberated whether she should allow the queen to flee, or if it would be more to her interest to put her to death. This is the subject of the following scene.

THE DONKEY AND THE STREAM

COMEDY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

MARQUIS DE PRÉVANNES.
BARON DE VALBRUN.
COUNTESS.
MARGUERITE, *her Cousin.*
Scene, Paris.

SCENE I.

(*A Parlor, the Countess, Marguerite.*)

Marguerite. I can not tell what troubles you.

The Countess. Oh! I say nothing. Perhaps these people, this noise, how can I tell? or a slight headache. I tried to amuse myself, and I have tired myself out.

(*She sits down.*)

Marguerite. My good cousin, do you know that you are not at all like yourself! You never used to be low-spirited, you were kindness itself, and now you are . . .

The Countess. My dear Marguerite, do you know that you talk just like a play! You used to be . . . what shall I say?

Marguerite. Well! One might say . . . sad . . . languid. . . .

The Countess. Ah, languid! You speak like your dearly beloved Monsieur de Prévannes!

Marguerite. My dearly beloved! you are pleased to call him. You are making fun of me; but you sigh, you are troubled. I can not understand this, for you are so beautiful! and you are young, a widow, and rich, and going to marry a baron.

The Countess. Ah! Marguerite, what are you saying?

Marguerite. You know that you are sighing. Monsieur de Valbrun is sometimes in a bad humor, it is true; for he is rather peculiar. Have you anything to complain of in him?

The Countess. I have only to reply to your questions. What a serious confidant I have in you!

Marguerite. Serious, no; but discreet at least. You think because I am not . . . very old . . . that I am not to be confided in. As for me, if I had the least thing to worry me . . but I have not. . . .

The Countess. Thank God!

Marguerite. I shall confide in you now, as to a friend . . . or rather . . . as to a sister who tries to take the place of a mother to me, for you have been that to me; you are my only guide, my only support, my protector; you have sheltered the orphan; my tutor lets you do as you think best (he is right, the poor man!).

But I am not ungrateful, stupid, or a gossip, and if something troubles you, you ought to tell me.

The Countess. You certainly are neither stupid nor ungrateful; but as for being a gossip . . .

Marguerite. Oh, my dear cousin!

The Countess. Oh, my dear cousin! Sometimes . . . it happens . . . as, for example, just now, mademoiselle—do not be angry—you show too much curiosity. Why? The reason is easily guessed. Monsieur de Prévannes is going to marry you. . . . Do not blush, it is a suitable match; for one under my protection, with your small figure and your small fortune, you should be well pleased; but my marriage should precede yours, at least people say so. . . . I can not tell why . . . for I am free. . . . I can marry whom I please, . . . as I intend to, . . . nothing is decided, . . . it can all be broken off any day. I have not quite decided. . . . No, truly, I do not know what to say . . . and that is the reason you question me.

Marguerite. No, madame, no; as for that, I am in no hurry to get married, no, not at all, and this young man . . .

The Countess. Truly, you are in no hurry! Do you not love this young man? Have you not sounded his praises a hundred times?

Marguerite. I acknowledge that I think him . . . good enough.

The Countess. What! have you not confessed that you thought him charming?

Marguerite. Oh, charming! his manners are good, but sometimes he is so conceited. . . .

The Countess. Does he think that no one is as intelligent as he?

Marguerite. Yes, grant that he is intelligent; but I did not say that any one . . .

The Countess. Is as graceful and refined. .

Marguerite. As for being refined, that may be so; but graceful, how absurd! Can a man be graceful?

The Countess. Finally, that you do not ask better . . .

Marguerite. Possibly, that I do not like him; but as for him, he is in love with me . . . He is so thoughtless, so frivolous! . . .

The Countess. And Mademoiselle Marguerite is neither thoughtless nor frivolous! Well, then! you can make him a wise and serious man, a philosopher, and he will make you a marquise. . . . The agreeable marquise that I can well imagine! First of all, you will spend your time gossiping; you will argue, as you are accustomed to do. . . .

Marguerite. Since you say we ought to marry.

The Countess. That is why you are so angry!

Marguerite. It is said that even in a well-ordered household there is quarreling occasionally. As I ought to marry him, I shall try.

The Countess. Is there any sense in that? Did you learn those principles at boarding-school? A woman who loves her husband . . .

Marguerite. But I tell you I do not love him.

The Countess. And you are going to marry him!

Marguerite. Yes, since my relatives wish me to; they have made the decision, my tutor advises me to, and you want me to. . . .

The Countess. Are you resigned?

Marguerite. I shall obey. . . . I am making a prudent match.

The Countess. How wise! how obedient! You make me laugh, even if I have . . . Ah! well, my dear, you do not love him and you will never love him; if you wish, I shall consent to it. But you do not dislike him, and you will like him. (*Sadly.*) Go. You will be happy!

Marguerite. I can not tell.

The Countess. As for me, I know it, and considering his thoughtlessness, I would not let him have you if I could find a worthier man. I shall not agree with you that I find no one to compare with him. . . .

Marguerite. You grieve me.

The Countess. No, no; but one thing I know quite well, and that is, that notwithstanding

Monsieur de Prévannes seems to be thoughtless and frivolous, he is a true friend, a man of feeling, quite capable of guiding the first steps of a child, who, do not be displeased . . .

Marguerite. He serve me as a guide! . . . Ah, I think so, . . . we shall see about that. . . .

The Countess. Doubtless, you think so. . .

Marguerite. Yes, I think that if he is affectionate and honorable, I am as much so as he; I think that I know how to behave; I think no one need give me any advice; I shall not allow it; it is quite evident I know my own business; I shall expect to be mistress in my own house. And if he has any ambition in that line . . .

The Countess. What then?

Marguerite. What then! let him dare attempt it, I shall settle him! . . . let him try! . . . Ah, Monsieur de Prévannes, you imagine that you are . . .

Scene II

(*The same, a Domestic.*)

The Domestic (*announcing*). Monsieur de Prévannes.

Marguerite. Let me withdraw.

The Countess. Why? Why so hasty?

(*To the domestic.*)

Ask him in.

(*The domestic goes out.*)

Marguerite. I have some writing to do.

The Countess. Oh, doubtless! you must write to some of your dear friends to tell them about your new dress.

Scene III

(*The same, Prévannes.*)

Prévannes. Good morning, ladies. I shall not ask you how you are this morning. I saw you just now at the races, and you were radiant.

The Countess. You were mistaken.

Prévannes. No, really; but what is the matter? It seems to me you look rather melancholy. . . . I say the baron is coming . . . he is more gloomy and dejected than ever.

Marguerite. We do not want to see him! I shall escape.

Prévannes. Stay, stay, there is still time. I met him in the Tuileries, walking in a funereal manner, in the depths of a lonely path. He stopped occasionally and stood as though in meditation. Any one who did not know him would think that he was writing verses.

Marguerite. And so the marquis is not willing to allow any one to have tastes different from his own?

Prévannes. Ah! ah! I was not careful what

I said; I came here like Mascarille, without imagining any evil, and I do not think I should be kept on the alert. Well! my charming enemy, what have you to say this morning, Mademoiselle Margot?

Marguerite. In the first place, I forbid you to call me by that dreadful name.

Prévannes. Forbid! ah! that is not a suitable word; you meant to say that the name annoys you. You are right; it shocks your dignity.

(*To the countess.*)

You are decidedly preoccupied.

The Countess. Yes, I shall speak to you presently.

Marguerite. I am not wanted here.

The Countess. Do not think that, my dear.

Prévannes. On the contrary, on the contrary. Let us not be ceremonious; between husband and wife it is admissible to speak so.

Marguerite. And that is why I hope never to hear you utter such sentiments.

Prévannes. Fie! it is not high-minded to disguise what one desires the most, and to renounce one's tenderest sentiments.

Marguerite. Ah! that is a well-turned sentence! Any one can see that you inherit the ability to use fine language, and that your ancestor must have been a man of spirit. In your words there is a perfume of the other world. Some day I shall send you a wig.

Prévannes. And I shall make you a present of a theological cap, so as to give you more weight and make you more representative. But tell me now, before you go, I want to know, frankly, which of my bad qualities has caused you to fall in love with me.

Marguerite. Apparently all of them, for there are so many it would be difficult to choose.

Prévannes. You are not in earnest. In the most perfect character, there is always some predominant trait that can not escape notice. For example, you, Mademoiselle Margot, . . . no . . . Marguerite. . . . Any one who knows you can readily see that your chief merit is your great modesty.

Marguerite. Yes, if I were only half as modest as you are vain.

Prévannes. I come naturally by my vanity, for I get it from you. What do you expect me to be? When I am suddenly distinguished by a person as charming as . . .

Marguerite. Oh! truly you are distinguished; I am far from confounding you with other mortals who are unfortunate enough to possess common sense.

Prévannes. Good! Here again you say something impolite. But I can see why you do it, and I pardon you. You only want to quarrel so that you can make peace; and what a fine

reconciliation it will be. Come, give me your little hand.

(*He tries to kiss her hand.*)

Marguerite. I detest you. Good-by, monsieur.

Prévannes. A cruel leave-taking.

Scene IV

(*The Countess, Prévannes.*)

The Countess. You are ceaselessly quarreling with each other?

Prévannes. It is because I love her with all my heart. Should I not be her husband?

The Countess. I think so, but . . .

Prévannes. Does she hesitate?

The Countess. She says she is in no haste.

Prévannes. We shall see; let us speak about you; what has happened?

The Countess. Nothing new. But tell me, how did you know as soon as you came that something troubled me?

Prévannes. It is not difficult to see if people's eyes are sad or not.

The Countess. True! sad they are for a hundred reasons, and often not one of these reasons is serious. If you were to meet one of your friends who looked less gay than the night before, would you ask him why? That happens to every one.

Prévannes. To every one, that may be. I shall ask no more questions and shall not concern myself further about it; but with persons we love, it is another matter, and I ask your permission to venture to be frank with you. I return to what I said: What has happened?

The Countess. I repeat, nothing new, and that is just what troubles me. Your friend is so peculiar, so bizarre. . . .

Prévannes. Ah! yes, he is undecided. He is somewhat like your little cousin.

The Countess. Oh! worse than that, and what is to be done? Our marriage was . . . agreed. . . . Truly I do not know.

Prévannes. Do I frighten you?

The Countess. No, no, you are almost a relative; besides, I have every confidence in you, and I must speak frankly. You doubtless know the peculiar position I am in? A widow, and free, and my family, it is true, can not dispose of me in marriage, but on no account do I wish to be totally separated from them: I am not obliged to follow the advice that is given me, but you understand that expediency . . .

Prévannes. Yes, expediency . . . and my friend Valbrun. . . .

The Countess. Monsieur de Valbrun, as you know, asked for my hand before my marriage. Since then he has been away, . . . he went . . . I do not know where; I no longer saw

him. Now he has returned, and renewed his suit; which was not repulsed, and . . . as I tell you, expediency, family interests, and even reciprocal inclination. . . . I am hiding nothing from you.

Prévannes. What would be the use?

The Countess. Everything seemed remarkably favorable. For three months things remained as they were. He saw me every day, and he said nothing.

Prévannes. That must have been tiresome.

The Countess. What can I do? Shall I await events to clear up this enigma, and until he chooses to recall my promise? There has been some trouble in my Cernay property about arrears or something, I do not exactly know what. It was settled yesterday; I have just heard the news. Shall I be the first to speak to him about it?

Prévannes. Yes, certainly. If you ask my advice, that is what I would do. I have known Valbrun since childhood, and he is the best man in the world; but he never does what he wants to do. Is the reason for this timidity, pride, or merely weakness? Perhaps all three combined. When timidity lays hold of us, it ruins everything, permeates everything, even things seemingly the most adverse to it. Here is a man who loves you, who adores you, I say; he would fight a hundred times, he would throw himself in the

fire for you; but he finds it an undertaking beyond his strength to decide about buying a horse, and if he enters a parlor he can not decide where to place his hat.

The Countess. Would it not be dangerous to marry a man with such a disposition?

Prévannes. Not at all, for you are not of a similar disposition. Besides, he is only that way when he is alone. Then perhaps he would have to inquire his way; but when he offers you his arm, he would know it.

The Countess. I see, you encourage me. But is it possible for a woman to speak first in certain matters?

Prévannes. Ah! madame, do you not love him?

The Countess. But are you quite sure that he loves me? This madame Darcy . . .

Prévannes. Ah! this is the trouble. It was when thinking of this woman, you told me just now, that this poor baron went, after your marriage, you did not know where. . . . But that is ancient history.

The Countess. Do you believe he is entirely free of her?

Prévannes. You may even go further . . but as for his being free, there is no doubt of that, for he never speaks of her now, not even to say something bad.

The Countess. He loved her well?

Prévannes. No one could have been more in love. This dreadful illness from which he nearly died, and his sullen defiance, he got from that charming person. Ah! Zounds! that woman, if I could only lay hold of her. . . .

The Countess. Are you vindictive?

Prévannes. No, I have no bitterness in my soul, and I do not see any good in treasuring anger. But this poor Henry, notwithstanding his infatuations, is the most candid, and a fine fellow. . . . A good dupe!

The Countess. Do you call him a dupe because he has been . . . deceived? He is your friend.

Prévannes. Yes, and for that reason I feel that my judgment is valuable. God pardon me! . . . Yes, and besides, I ought not to say so, . . . but I detest duplicity, perfidy, the whole arsenal of feminine arms; I know well that good use can be made of them, but I dislike them; and that is why, if I did not love your cousin, I would love you.

The Countess. Shall I tell him?

Prévannes (*at the window*). If you choose. Here comes the baron himself, I recognize him. He is walking slowly in the yard. . . . He retraces his steps. . . . Is he going to enter? That remains to be seen.

The Countess. Monsieur de Prévannes, my heart fails me.

Prévannes. Why?

The Countess. I can not, no, I can not follow the advice you have given me. To speak first . . . dare I say . . . but he is the one who should declare himself . . . are you dreaming? . . .

Prévannes. I am not dreaming! . . . Speak, madame; you can venture, I am here.

The Countess. What! Before you!

Prévannes. Ah! yes, before me. What harm would that do?

The Countess. But suppose he were to hesitate, to refuse?

Prévannes. Well! madame, ah, well! What would happen? You see, the Romans . . .

The Countess. Keep quiet; I hear him coming.

Prévannes. Good! You do not know him. It is just like him to come in quite naturally, in this way! He spends a great while dreaming in the antechamber, shivers in the dining-room, and then, as he crosses the parlor, asks himself if he had better go drown himself.

The Countess. You make me laugh in spite of myself, as Marguerite did a little while ago. Ah! you two are well-matched . . . but I repeat that my courage has given out.

Prévannes. And I repeat that he loves you. If I were not sure of this, would I have given you this advice which you dare not follow?

Would I have counseled you thus in regard to any other man but Valbrun? Would I have said a word to you about it? God protect me: if we have been discussing a fashionable nonentity, or an ordinary man . . . but, on the contrary, we have been talking about an obstinate man who is also irresolute. He loves you . . he would be very foolish! And you love him, you are engaged, you are his promised, as the country people say.

The Countess. But I am a woman.

Prévannes. He is a good man. I would as lief swear to what he said as to my own word. What have you to fear? Come, madame, take courage, a little kindness, a little pity, for you only have to smile! . . .

The Countess. Do you think so? But if you remain, your pleasantries will frighten him.

Prévannes. Not at all, I shall say nothing; I shall look through your albums.

(*He sits near a table.*)

Scene V

(*The same, Valbrun.*)

The Countess. It is you, sir! How are you?

Valbrun. Madame, I reproach myself for not having seen you yesterday; I was obliged . . . against my will. . . .

(*To Prévannes.*)

Good morning, Edward; I was obliged . .

The Countess. You were obliged . . .

Valbrun. Yes, I was . . . in the country. It rests . . . it entertains one a little. . . .

(*He sits down.*)

The Countess. Doubtless; it is very good for your health.

Valbrun. Yes, madame; I was very much afraid that you would not be in to-day.

The Countess. Why? You ought to know quite well how impatiently I was looking for you. Formerly you came oftener.

Valbrun. This is not a reproach I hope?

The Countess. No; why should I reproach you? . . . You surely do not deserve it.

Valbrun. No, madame; I believe you will do me the justice of not changing your opinion of me.

The Countess. If I were to suspect you of forgetting your friends, I would feel that I had committed a crime.

Valbrun. Yes . . . you are right; it would be a real crime. . . . Are you going to the opera to-night?

The Countess. I can not tell: I am not feeling well.

Valbrun. That is sad.

(*During this scene, Prévannes often glances at the countess, showing signs of impatience.*)

The Countess. Oh! it will not amount to anything . . . By the bye, baron, I want to tell you . . .

(*Aside.*)

I dare not, it is impossible!

(*Aloud.*)

How is Madame d'Orvilliers?

Valbrun. My aunt? Very well, I thank you. She is soon going to leave for the country.

The Countess. Indeed; and are you going too?

Valbrun. I do not know; that depends on circumstances. . . .

The Countess. On circumstances. . . . And do these circumstances depend upon you?

Valbrun. Not altogether. One's actions are not always under one's control.

The Countess. You surprise me. I think you told me . . . lately . . . that you were independent, in your position as well as in your fortune; that nothing disturbed you, or vexed you. You are as I am, perfectly free, and I can give myself to whomsoever I please.

Valbrun. I also am free, as you say; but I have not yet determined what course to take.

The Countess. So I see.

Prévannes (*apart*). Plague take him.

Valbrun. Yes, it is embarrassing. Some people advise me to take exercise, others prescribe absolute repose. Truly in the country one can have his choice.

The Countess. Doubtless. Speaking of the country, I want to tell you . . .

(*Apart.*)

How tiresome!

(*Aloud.*)

Your country place is not far from Paris?

Valbrun. Oh, my God! no, madame, it is but a step from Choisy; an English park; and if I might only hope that your presence would embellish it. . . .

The Countess. But that might be. . . . I shall not say so. . . . I remember even . .

Valbrun (*rising and saluting her*). I shall be happy to receive you.

The Countess. Where are you going?

Valbrun. I only wanted to see you a moment. I . . . I shall return . . . if you will allow me.

(*He salutes again, and is about going when Prévannes makes a sign to the countess to retain him.*)

The Countess. Do not be in such a hurry! Remain now. I have something to say to you.

Valbrun. As you wish.

(*He sits down.*)

The Countess (*aside*). Prévannes makes him ill at ease. I knew it would be so.

(*Aloud.*)

I want to speak to you about my land in Cernay, you know . . .

(*Aside.*)

I am so perturbed. . . .

Scene VI

(*The same, Marguerite.*)

Marguerite (*opening the door without entering*). My cousin . . .

The Countess. Well! What is it?

Marguerite. Has Monsieur de Prévannes gone?

Prévannes. No, mademoiselle; I am examining the charming drawings that have no signature, which is immaterial, for in the delicate touch the hand that drew them is easily seen.

Marguerite. Write me a madrigal in a low key.

Prévannes. How will you pay me for my trouble?

Marguerite. I told you: by giving you a wig.

Prévannes. And I shall give you a crown.

Marguerite. Of dead leaves?

Prévannes. Of orange blossoms.

Marguerite. I do not want it.

Prévannes. Come now, come now!

Marguerite. I can not spare the time.

Scene VII

(*The Countess, Prévannes, Valbrun.*)

Valbrun. Truly these drawings are perfect. (*To the countess.*) You will tell me, madame. . . .

The Countess. But . . . I know no more.

Valbrun. You were speaking, I believe, of your lands. . . .

The Countess. Ah! yes, of my lands. . . . You know that I was obliged to have a lawsuit; everything is settled now, and the necessary formalities will be settled in a few days.

Valbrun. In a few days?

The Countess. Yes, I have received a letter.

Valbrun. Ah! a letter?

The Countess. Yes . . . it is here. . .

Prévannes (*aside*). I pity them; I can not remain silent.

(*Aloud.*)

Henry, would you rather have me go?

Valbrun. Why?

Prévannes. I fear I am in the way. I have remained here to look at the pictures, as though I were at home. I fear that I am preventing you

from telling the countess the joy you feel that there is no longer any opposition . . .

Valbrun. I hope, madame, that you do not think that any interesting details can change my opinion. I really did fear there might be obstacles.

Prévannes. There are none.

Valbrun. Is he telling the truth, madame?

The Countess. But . . .

(*Prévannes signs to her.*)

Yes, sir.

Valbrun (*coldly*). You delight me! I still hope that you do not doubt it . . . how much I wish . . . that nothing would retard the moment . . .

(*He arises.*)

If you are not going to the opera to-night, I ask you permission . . .

Prévannes. Why the deuce are you so busy?

Valbrun (*troubled*). An errand near by, at the house of a . . . at the house of a neighbor. Yes, madame, I shall not be long. I shall return, as you really wish me.

The Countess. Come back at once.

Valbrun. Yes, madame.

The Countess. Promise me.

Valbrun. Certainly; what would you have me do when I am not looking at you?

(*He salutes and leaves.*)

Scene VIII

(*The Countess, Prévannes.*)

The Countess. Well! sir, do you say he loves me? Ah! I am choking!

Prévannes (*rising*). Certainly that fellow is . . . peculiar.

The Countess. You have seen him, you have heard him. I have done as you wished. I ask you now if it is possible for me to play this rôle any longer, and if I can bear being treated in this way? How embarrassed and cold he was when he listened to me, when he replied to me! You have made a mistake; he does not love me, or rather he loves another. Madame Darcy or some one else, what does it matter who? I am not made after their pattern. And when I believed what you said, that, notwithstanding his rudeness, he loves me in the depths of his soul, what good did it do? Are you rather not trying to get me to cure him of his gloomy mood, and, instead of being light-hearted, make myself the humble slave of a cross grumbler? No, had he a hundred fine qualities and a thousand of the best sentiments in the world, his hesitation is something that I can not stand. I blush when I think what I said to him, I am humiliated, I am . . . I am shocked.

Prévannes. I see only one way to accomplish this.

The Countess. What?

Prévannes. Make him jealous.

The Countess. What do you wish to say?

Prévannes. That explains itself. Make him jealous. He will then make a declaration; unless you shut the door against him, and I never see him again.

The Countess. You have already given me bad advice, and I shall not think of trying these tricks.

Prévannes. Good! tricks? so simple that it is worn out, an old stratagem used in all novels and vaudevilles, a well-known way, a classic way! Act pleasantly, but coldly, or flirt outrageously; be visible or unapproachable according to the weather, or the caprice of the moment; invite the poor devil to a reception, and let him sit two hours on his chair without condescending to look at him, or say a word to him; take the arm of a good waltzer, stylishly attired, and smile mysteriously, regarding the victim over your shoulder; then suddenly veering round, make him a sign to come near you, and when his feelings, too long restrained, burst forth in murmurs, sweet reproaches, or tender entreaties, repeat everything he says aloud, ingeniously, before a dozen people who care nothing about it, . . . and go, above all, go opportunely, disappear like

Galatea! . . . I shall never finish if I indulge in details. Coquetry is the most bitter tear; disdain the most murderous. And you will not try this natural course? But you have seen nothing, read nothing. . . . You have not studied literature, madame.

The Countess. If I recollect, you just said you detested feminine tricks.

Prévannes. One minute! We are talking about deceiving a man to make him happy; that is not an ordinary trick, and I told you that the occasion . . .

The Countess. Are you well convinced of my awkwardness?

Prévannes. Ah, great God! It never occurred to me. I beg your pardon. I am like an ordinary fellow, who, when remonstrating . .

The Countess. No, Monsieur de Prévannes, I shall not adopt your tricks. I have neither the ability nor the taste for them. If I strike, I shall go direct to the point. But your idea may be right. I say once more I am shocked; and if any one should treat me in that way . . . I would become spiteful, good as I am. . . . I would be more than satirical, I would be revenged.

Prévannes. Take courage, countess! It is the will of the gods.

The Countess. To make him jealous! Does he love me well enough for that?

Prévannes. We shall soon see. He will not speak; question him, as was the fashion in the good old days.

The Countess. To make him jealous! To treat him with the indignity he treated me. To make him suffer in his turn!

Prévannes. Yes, he does not love you any too simply, too naturally; it is unpardonable.

The Countess. Yes, it is a good and just idea; one can not discuss things forever as he does. Yes, I shall do it. I have suffered too much, my mind is made up . . . to make him jealous.

Prévannes. Truly, I say, he is ingenuous, he is a good fellow, he is both good and weak. He must be made to suffer, to be reduced to despair; then let justice have its way.

The Countess. To make him jealous, but of whom?

Prévannes. Of any one you like.

The Countess. Well, then! of you.

Prévannes. That is impossible; he knows I am in love with your cousin.

The Countess. He also knows that it is possible to be untrue to one's word.

Prévannes. Men do not know that.

The Countess. You counsel me to be avenged and you will not aid me to bring it about! I tell you my mind is made up. Marquis de Prévannes, are you afraid?

Prévannes. I do not think so.

The Countess. Stay here, and do as I tell you.

Prévannes. No, really, it is impossible.

The Countess. Nevertheless, I can rely on no one but you to attempt, as you say, to test him in this way. I shall warn Marguerite. No harm shall come to you by doing it.

Prévannes. This is a good girl. I agree to it; what do you want me to do?

The Countess. Sit down and write.

Prévannes. Anything you wish.

(*He sits down before a table.*)

About warning your cousin. I kindly request you to do nothing of the kind.

The Countess. Why not? She might be grieved.

Prévannes. And suppose I want to test her also. Let me have that pleasure. Have you not already said that in regard to me, to our proposed marriage, she showed something . . . like hesitation.

The Countess. But . . . yes.

Prévannes. Well! we will kill two birds with one stone, as the saying is.

The Countess. But you know that Marguerite loves you.

Prévannes. Does not Valbrun love you? Do you know anything to the contrary?

The Countess. She told me so.

Prévannes. She has not said so to me.

The Countess. And you wish her to tell you? Truly, you are very foppish.

Prévannes. Perhaps.

The Countess. She is but a child.

Prévannes. Perhaps that is so also.

The Countess. You are very cruel.

Prévannes. Perhaps, but I want to talk no more about it. In this house every one is undecided; this has lasted for three months. You love Valbrun; he adores you; Marguerite is fond of me, she is the only one in the world for me; we must end this to-day; yes, madame, yes, even to-day. . . . And if there is some fatality about this, a little gaiety, a little deceit, if you wish it, O my God! let me do it. Imagine that I am going to be married, and that it is the last time in my life that I am allowed to laugh; this is my last folly as a bachelor. . . . Come, madame, I am at your service.

The Countess. You are extremely bold! Well! The first thing you must do is to write me a note.

Prévannes. A note! that would be compromising. But if you want to make him jealous, it would be better that you should be the one to write to me.

The Countess. And what do you want me to say to you?

Prévannes. But . . . that you think me

charming, . . . delightful, . . . extremely modest . . . and these are stanch characteristics . . .

The Countess. Do not joke, but write.

Prévannes. I really want to; but I shall change nothing when once I have written, I warn you.

(*He writes.*)

The Countess (*watching him write*). Ah! what are you writing?

Prévannes. Let me finish it.

(*He rises.*)

Stay, this is all I can do for you.

The Countess. Let me see it.

(*She reads.*)

"If I may believe you, madame, you love me; but is saying so sufficient? You are sure of my heart; let nothing interfere with my happiness, accept my hand, I beg you!" Truly, Prévannes, you are always joking. What use do you wish me to make of this note? It is indecorous.

Prévannes. How, indecorous?

The Countess. But really it is: "If I might believe what you say. . . ." This is a fatality.

Prévannes. Ah! madame, as it happens that for once I can play the fop before you with impunity, let me profit by it!

The Countess (*looking out of the window*). I hear a carriage. It is your friend returning.

Prévannes. Put the note on the table, here with the other papers. Pretend it has been left there by mistake.

The Countess. But such a thing as this would not be left around.

Prévannes. I certainly admire your prudence; but if he finds this paper, it will be all that is necessary. Does jealousy reason? He is coming. Say two words to him, if you like, and then retire, if you wish. You must appear angry. Fly, madame, disappear, vanish like a ghost! . . . like a fairy? . . . I repeat, there is nothing like it for tormenting an upright man.

The Countess. I scarcely know, if I have the courage. . . .

Prévannes. Then I shall tear this note in pieces.

The Countess. No. But your project. . .

Prévannes. It is indecorous. Will you follow it or not?

The Countess. I wish to, I wish to; I have suffered too much! But I would prefer not to speak to him.

Prévannes. Well! go to your room, lock yourself in, and let no one see you the rest of the day.

The Countess. But . . .

Prévannes. Let no one see you, I say; or I shall deny everything—I say everything.

(*At the moment the baron enters, the countess leaves the room, bowing coldly.*)

The Countess (*in low tone to Prévannes*). Yes, let him suffer in his turn, if he loves me!

Prévannes. We shall see.

Scene IX

(*Prévannes, Valbrun.*)

Valbrun (*for some time taken by surprise*). Is the countess angry with me?

Prévannes. I do not know.

Valbrun. She left the room, scarcely bowing to me.

Prévannes. She had some orders to give.

Valbrun. No, her glance said as much as a good-by . . . and a sad good-by. . . . I who came . . .

Prévannes. Listen now; perhaps she is displeased. You did not treat her any too well this morning.

Valbrun. I! I said nothing that I know . .

Prévannes. Oh! you were very polite; no one could complain of that. But if you think such manners are going to . . .

Valbrun. What?

Prévannes. These are not what are expected of you.

Valbrun. What have I done that is wrong?

She told me that there was nothing to interfere with our marriage . . . and I told her . . . that I was delighted to hear it.

Prévannes. Yes, you told her you were delighted, but you were not, the least in the world. Do you think there has been any mistake made?

Valbrun. I do not know. But when I left you a short time ago, I went to our notary, and made all my arrangements for this marriage.

Prévannes. Truly?

Valbrun. I came directly back, and did not do anything else. What surprises you in this? You look at me in such astonishment.

Prévannes. No, but I feared . . . I thought . . .

Valbrun. Was this not proper? Is there any possibility of the countess changing her mind?

Prévannes. She? Oh! I tell you no. But is it . . . the truth? . . . I can not believe it.

(*Aside.*)

Are we the ones who are being deceived?

Valbrun. What is it that you can not believe?

Prévannes. Nothing at all, no, nothing, it is very plain.

(*Aside.*)

I shall come here no more, after this visit!

Valbrun. You look surprised, no matter how you deny it.

Prévannes. No.

Valbrun. It is the truth, and I understand why. My coldness, my constraint, struck you as peculiar this morning.

Prévannes. Not the least in the world; and what does that matter now that you have made up your mind! And is it entirely made up?

Valbrun. I can not imagine why you doubt this.

Prévannes. I do not doubt it, and I congratulate you.

(*He takes his hand.*)

And so, Henry, we are cousins . . . on the woman's side. . . . This relationship is as good as another . . . is it not?

(*Aside.*)

Things being as they are . . . this is very strange, . . . but, . . . finally, . . besides . . . This note is useless. . . . I shall take it myself very daintily. . . .

(*He looks on the table.*)

Where have I put it?

Valbrun. What are you looking for?

Prévannes. A paper. Shall I tell you about it? I thought you hesitated. . . .

Valbrun. I?

Prévannes. Yes.

(*Aside.*)

Where the devil have I put it? Ah! here it is.

(*He is about to take it.*)

Valbrun (*sitting down with a sad expression*). Ah! if I hesitated, you know the reason quite well.

Prévannes. How?

Valbrun. Ah! doubtless, you know my life, you know the reason perfectly. . . .

Prévannes. I? Not at all!

Valbrun. This fatal reminiscence. . . .

Prévannes. What reminiscence?

Valbrun. Do you ask me?

Prévannes. Well! Madame Darcy. Are you going to tell me that lamentable tale for the hundredth time?

Valbrun. I am not going to tell you. You make fun of everything.

Prévannes. No, but with your permission, I shall joke about Madame Darcy.

Valbrun. You have spoken quickly. . . . If you only knew her!

Prévannes. Yes.

Valbrun. As you wish. . . . I have loved her. . . . Grant that it was a fault, foolish and absurd, if you wish, . . . but I have loved her, and the harm she did me frightens me in regard to the future. . . . I fear I shall but repeat the past.

Prévannes. Ah! Let the past alone? Who has not a past? You will be happy. . . . Begin, then, by forgetting everything. . . . Are you in the Court of Assizes to be asked ques-

tions as to your antecedents? Come, come, look over this album. . . . In it is a drawing by Marguerite.

Valbrun. I am familiar with the drawing. . . . Ah! my friend, if you only knew. . .

Prévannes. But you know very well that I know.

(*Holding in his hand the note he had taken.*)

Is it not a saying that there is only one woman in the world? Madame Darcy has caused you much trouble, she acted badly; she drove you to it, and, still worse, she lied to you. She is a vile creature. Well! what next? Are you going to make of this a bugbear at which you alone will be frightened? Will you never be cured of your evil infatuation?

Valbrun (*rising*). Indeed, if my anger could cool . . . if I only had a little hope left . . . if I thought I could forget . . . this home would be the means of accomplishing it.

Prévannes. If you could, if you thought you could. . . . Ah! then, you have not made up your mind?

Valbrun. Yes, indeed; but I tremble when I think of it.

Prévannes (*aside*). I think I shall return my note to its place.

(*Aloud.*)

But, finally, tell me definitely whether you are pleased with the countess or not.

Valbrun. How can you doubt that? I shall not say she pleases me, but rather that she charms me, she enchants me. I know no one in the world who can compare with her. . . .

Prévannes. Really?

Valbrun. You do not appreciate her.

Prévannes. Yes, indeed.

Valbrun. You caught a glimpse of her, notwithstanding your thoughtlessness. With all her frankness, she is intelligent; with all her intelligence she has a heart. She is grace and beauty personified. . . . When I look at her . . I see happiness in her eyes.

Prévannes. Why do you not say these things to her, instead of telling them to me? Do you want to wed me?

Valbrun. Your jokes will not help matters.

Prévannes. You love her?

Valbrun. I adore her.

Prévannes. In that case . . .

(*He puts the note in his pocket.*)

She is but a few steps from here, in her room. . . . Zounds! . . . if I were only in your place. . . .

Valbrun (*sitting down again*). I wish I were in yours. Ah! You are happy, you will marry Marguerite . . . while as for me . . .

Prévannes. The wind is beginning to turn. (*Aloud.*)

I am to marry Marguerite? . . . I can not tell.

Valbrun. No?

Prévannes. No.

Valbrun. Is that possible? A young girl who is so pretty, so amiable, a little too gay sometimes, but a good girl, and talented, . . . very rich. . . . Have you not promised to marry her?

Prévannes. And you, have you not also promised yours?

Valbrun. I dare not, I can not, I shall never dare, . . . at least, . . . however . .

Prévannes (*aside*). The devil take him!

Valbrun. If you only knew what reminiscences and what presentiments pursue me! A man in love can afford to joke, but a man who suffers never can.

Prévannes. And what makes you suffer, I ask? Push open this door; she is waiting for you.

Valbrun. Yes, happiness may be there behind this door. . . . I can not open it. . . I would retreat at the very door-sill, . . . it is not for me to hope.

Prévannes. Push open this door, I tell you! Stay, Henry, do you know what you look like just now? To speak reverently, you resemble an ass who is afraid of drinking in the brook.

Valbrun. As you wish. Have you, who joke about my suffering, never been betrayed? I shall believe, if you wish, that you have never passed through such bitter experiences; have you never come across perfidy and evil-doers?

Prévannes. Sometimes, like every one else.

Valbrun. Ah! unhappy be the person who gives you this sad experience! An inconstant woman becomes our tormentor. Insensible to all our pain, she has the hardest, most implacable heart! By offering you her friendship, when she takes away her love, she thinks she recompenses you for everything! And what a friendship! Only a semblance; no frankness, no confidences; only a perpetual farce, a perpetual punishment, but too happy if you die under the ordeal!

Prévannes (*aside*). Decidedly, I must have recourse to heroic measures; where shall I put this letter? . . . In his hat? . . . No, he might guess. . . . Ah! I know! . . . In mine.

(*He puts the letter in his hat.*)

So that he may find it. . . .

(*He takes Valbrun's hat.*)

Good-by, Henry. After all, perhaps you are right. The countess, with her beautiful eyes, may be a little giddy. . . .

Valbrun. Do you think so?

Prévannes. Who can tell? She is a woman.

Valbrun. But say . . . do you think her capable of that?

Prévannes. Most likely. Considering everything, I advise you to cast your affections in another direction. I think you would do better to marry Célimène. . . .

Valbrun. But . . .

Prévannes. She is a wiser woman. Good-by, my friend.

(*Aside in leaving.*)

I shall not let him out of my sight.

Scene X

Valbrun (*alone*). How quickly he changed his ideas! What does it mean? His manner was so mysterious and at the same time so jocular. . . . Well! It was only a passing mood. . . . However, it would be better for me to see the countess . . . so that I can find out why she treated me in such a peculiar manner. . . . I would give the world . . . Where have I put my hat? . . . Ah! . . . but no, it is Edward's. This heedless fellow has taken mine.

(*He finds the note.*)

What is this? How did this note come here? A letter! No address and not sealed.

(*He reads.*)

"If I might believe you." . . . Great

God! is it possible . . . that Edward, my friend from childhood? Such treachery! Ah! I am crushed, I am annihilated! Who would ever have thought this? Edward, the countess, to deceive me in this way! That is why he joked me . . . why she fled. Yes, I have been their dupe, doubtless their amusement. . . . Ah! I shall be revenged. . . . I shall seek him out. . . . I shall demand justice. . . No, no, I would do better to go in, and accuse her to her face. . . . Ah!

Scene XI

(*Valbrun, Marguerite.*)

Valbrun. Is this you, Mademoiselle Marguerite! Come, Heaven has sent you.

Marguerite. How, Heaven? It was my cousin sent me. Has Monsieur de Prévannes left?

Valbrun. Yes, he has just left . . . ah! how happy he is! . . . You think of no one but him . . . you love him. Well! know then . . .

Marguerite. Oh! I love him. . . . I love him. . . . Stop just there! You decide things very quickly. But, good God, what is the matter with you? You frighten me.

Valbrun. Know then that they both have betrayed us.

Marguerite. What, both of us?

Valbrun. You and me.

Marguerite. And which one is the traitor?

Valbrun. My perfidious friend, your unworthy lover! . . .

Marguerite. Oh! . . . oh! . . . What words you use! . . . Did Monsieur de Prévannes teach you such words as these?

Valbrun. Yes, he did.

Marguerite. You want to laugh.

Valbrun. No, I have not the least desire to laugh.

Marguerite. And what is the reason of all this?

Valbrun. Here, mademoiselle, read this letter.

Marguerite (*reading*). "If I may believe you, madame. . . ."

Valbrun. See, I pray you, see mademoiselle, could we possibly have expected this? . . .

Marguerite (*reading*). "May nothing more retard my happiness. . . ."

Valbrun. What do you think about this? To what kind of a woman would a man dare to write in this style? Can anything in the world be more impertinent, more insulting?

Marguerite. You tell the truth. . . .

Valbrun. Can it not clearly be seen that to write such a note to a woman one must have the right to do it? And yet could one ever have a

right to send such a letter? And the countess tolerates such language! Mademoiselle, we must take revenge!

Marguerite (*continuing to read*). "But is saying so sufficient? . . ."

Valbrun. You are reading attentively.

Marguerite. Yes, I can even hear myself read. . . . And you think we should take revenge? How can we?

Valbrun. By renouncing them, in breaking off completely all connection with them. They are deceiving us and making a butt of us. . . If you feel this insult as I do, let us forget these two ungrateful people. . . . Accept my hand.

Marguerite (*distractedly*). Your hand.

Valbrun. Yes, I venture to offer it to you, if you will deign to accept it. I want to consecrate my whole life to effacing the odious remembrance of a treachery that ought to shock you.

Marguerite (*still reading*). Will you consecrate your whole life to me? . . .

Valbrun. Yes, I swear it, and when my word is given, I . . .

Marguerite. Where did you find this letter?

Valbrun. In my hat; that is to say, no, in his: for he was betrayed through his own stupidity.

Marguerite. In his hat!

Valbrun. Yes, there, on this chair.

Marguerite. Monsieur de Valbrun, they are making fun of you.

Valbrun. What are you saying? This letter . . .

Marguerite. This letter must be but a joke.

Valbrun. A joke! That is strange. And why do you think so? Is this a plot, a snare they have laid for me? Speak, do you know anything about it?

Marguerite. Absolutely nothing; but it is as clear as day.

Valbrun. What? Please explain this to me. If this is a conspiracy, and if you know it. . . .

Marguerite. No, I know nothing about it, but I am convinced.

(*Reading the letter a second time.*)

"If I may believe you, madame." Ah! ah! ah!

(*She laughs.*)

And you take that, ah! ah! literally! . . . ah! ah! my God! how absurd! . . . and you believe that my cousin . . . that Monsieur de Prévannes . . . ah! heavens! . . . and you do not see how impossible it all is . . . ah! ah! . . .

Valbrun. Truly, I can not see it. . . .

Marguerite (*continuing to laugh*). Ah! ah! ah! the poor baron . . . Who can not see through it, . . . who does not perceive it?

Ah! ah! that is why . . . your serious aspect makes me die laughing, and you want to marry me, ah! ah! . . . I ask your pardon, but it is not in my power. . . . Ah! ah! but it is impossible! . . . There is no sense in it! . . . ah! ah! . . .

Valbrun. Really, mademoiselle, when I showed you this letter I had not the least idea of making you so merry. But be there a conspiracy or not . . .

Marguerite. As I told you, I know nothing about it.

Valbrun. And as for me, I know what I shall do. Adieu, Mademoiselle Marguerite.

Marguerite. Where are you going? Come with me, to my cousin's house; everything will be cleared up.

Valbrun. Your cousin; I shall never see her again in my life, . . . nor you either, . . . no, nor any one—with one exception—laugh as much as you choose! . . . I hope you will never know how much treachery can make one suffer! . . . Ah! . . . I am broken-hearted! in despair! . . . Ill luck to her, ill luck to myself! . . . Good-by, good-by, mademoiselle!

Marguerite. Listen.

Valbrun. Good-by, good-by!

Scene XII

(*Marguerite, alone, then Prévannes.*)

Marguerite. He leaves forever, like a man out of his senses. Poor baron de Valbrun! Perhaps he is to be pitied. . . . But he was so comical in his despair . . . and his offers. . . . Ah! it is past belief! . . .

Prévannes (*aside*). Here is this little rebel who has the reputation of never knowing her own mind. She is very gay, at least she seems so to me. . . . Zounds! I must make her speak out also.

(*Aloud.*)

What is all this about? What has occurred? You are so happy, mademoiselle . . . Marguerite, that you are laughing all to yourself.

Marguerite. May you laugh at this too. . . . Here are some more of your silly speeches. When will you learn how to spell? When will you cease to call yourself a marquis?

Prévannes. I can not help that, my father's to blame for it; but you, my future little marquise—in good old French, called Margot—what are you joking about?

Marguerite. I can not be angry, I want to laugh so much. It was Monsieur de Valbrun who just left. . . .

Prévannes. Well?

Marguerite. He showed me a letter. . . .

Prévannes. A letter?

Marguerite. Signed with your name . . . very shameful, needless to say, . . . a letter written to my cousin.

Prévannes. Well?

(*Aside.*)

Let us look at it.

(*Aloud.*)

I do not know what you will say.

Marguerite. Now, feign ignorance in your turn! . . . It is unfortunate that you gave me no warning; but that only makes it more droll; your joke has succeeded. . . . It could not have been better, . . . it is cruel, . . . but I understand. . . . Just imagine how exasperated he is!

Prévannes. Really?

Marguerite. Yes, he is looking for you. . . . Ah! you will have to make up for this!

Prévannes. Is that all?

Marguerite. Well! there is much more harm done. In his eyes you are the most disloyal of marquises, and my beautiful cousin is the most perfidious of countesses. He renounces everything, he deserts us . . . he wants to kill you, and marry me.

Prévannes. Marry you . . . himself?

Marguerite. Yes, sir.

Prévannes. He must have been very angry! . . . And what reply did you make to that?

Marguerite. I only laughed. . . . I thought no more about it.

Prévannes. I do not see anything so amusing in this.

Marguerite. What did you say?

Prévannes. It is to be regretted that he showed you this letter. But since everything has been found out . . . if harm is done . . .

Marguerite. What then?

Prévannes. He will kill me, if he can, and he will wed you, if he can.

Marguerite. Ah! that is your opinion?

Prévannes. What is to be done! If I am in love with your cousin, it is not my fault; it was a secret. You do not love me. . . .

Marguerite. And you?

Prévannes. I? well, that is my affair. All this is unfortunate, very unfortunate.

Marguerite. Now then! Are you speaking seriously or merely continuing your bad joke?

Prévannes. I shall continue . . . seriously.

Marguerite. Do you love my cousin?

Prévannes. Yes, with all my heart.

Marguerite. Do you want to marry her?

Prévannes. Why not?

Marguerite. Well, sir, I am sorry to tell you, but . . .

Prévannes. What, then?

Marguerite. I do not believe it.

Prévannes. You do not believe in anything.

Marguerite. No; you are not as ferocious as you pretend to be.

Prévannes. I wonder how many little girls . . .

Marguerite. Sir!

Prévannes. Or rather how many young people feel quite sure of us. They really are more sure of us than of themselves.

Marguerite. More than of themselves.

Prévannes. Ah! doubtless, they take these speeches for the deepest penetration, and lose their heads over such flattering words.

Marguerite. If you wish me to lose all patience with you, you are beginning to succeed.

Prévannes. I would be distressed mademoiselle, and fearing that may happen, I retire.

(*He makes believe he is going.*)

Marguerite (*aside*). Is he speaking in earnest?

(*Aloud.*)

Monsieur de Prévannes!

Prévannes. Mademoiselle?

Marguerite. Seriously . . . are you going to marry . . . my cousin?

Prévannes. Yes, mademoiselle.

Marguerite. Do you think I care?

Prévannes. I did not say you did.

Marguerite. I think it a great joke.

Prévannes. I do not doubt it.

Marguerite. No; you thought the news would grieve me.

Prévannes. Not at all.

Marguerite. That I would reproach you.

Prévannes. Not at all.

Marguerite. That I would regret giving you up . . . that I would be distressed about it. . . .

(*Ready to weep.*)

That, perhaps, I might weep. . . .

Prévannes (*aside*). O heavens! . . .

(*Aloud.*)

My dear Marguerite. . . .

Marguerite. Never again call me Marguerite or Margot. . . . Yes, you believed it . . . you hoped it would be so.

(*Prévannes tries to take her hand, but she withdraws it quickly.*)

No, I shall not speak to you, I shall not reproach you, but it is infamous!

Prévannes. Mademoiselle . . .

Marguerite. This is a cowardly act! Either you are now telling a lie or you have deceived me all along. You say that I do not love you. How do you know? I think it very impertinent of you to try to decide that!

Prévannes. Listen to me.

Marguerite. I do not wish to listen to what you have to say, but if there still remains any

vestige of honesty in your soul, you will have more to regret than I, for you know that you have judged me amiss, that you are greatly mistaken in supposing that I am indifferent, that I am far from being so, and that I . . .

Scene XIII

(*The same, the Countess.*)

The Countess (*a letter in her hand*). Are you here, Monsieur de Prévannes? And Marguerite, I see you are greatly moved.

Marguerite. I, my cousin? Not the least in the world.

The Countess. Is this some new scheme, some new test of your own? It is extremely successful! . . . Stay, I have just received this letter.

Prévannes (*reading*). "Madame, it was not necessary for you to take the trouble to deceive me. You never shall see me again as long as I live, and you deserve no pity. . . ."

The Countess. What do you think of this?

Marguerite. What has happened?

The Countess. You know. Well, sir?

Prévannes. Well, madame, I think that is fine. "You deserve no pity . . ." It is extremely frank and moderate.

The Countess. Really! Your coolness

charms me. Have you not an ultimate object in view in regard to this? You see now that Monsieur de Valbrun believed only too readily in your feigned letter, and, thanks to your fine tricks, as you call them, I have lost, not only a lover, but the esteem of the only man I love.

Marguerite (*to Prévannes*). How? Sir, you have just deceived me! Was there nothing true in all this? You played with me as with a child! . . . Go, this is an insult!

Prévannes. Yes, yes, it is an insult; but notwithstanding that, you avowed . . .

Marguerite. I did not say it.

Prévannes. No, but I understood it.

(*To the countess.*)

Madame, Mademoiselle Marguerite and I have explained everything and have come to an amicable understanding.

Marguerite. As far from it as ever. A short time ago I felt like the baron; now I am of my cousin's opinion. I shall never forgive you.

Prévannes. You will pardon me sooner than you think.

The Countess. It is time joking should cease. Monsieur de Prévannes, I expect you to make the necessary explanation. You have been the cause of all this trouble, and you must repair the damage.

Prévannes. Really, madame, really, what must I do, if you please?

The Countess. You ask what you should do? Monsieur de Valbrun is justified in accusing me of perfidy; the first thing to do is to disabuse him of this idea.

Prévannes. Yes, madame.

Marguerite. Do it at once.

Prévannes. Yes, mademoiselle.

The Countess. The whole truth must be told, even if I am compromised by it.

Marguerite. Yes, even if we are compromised by it.

Prévannes. Very well, I shall compromise you.

The Countess. See, sir, see to what danger your thoughtlessness has exposed me! Even if Monsieur de Valbrun finds that I am not guilty, what will he think of me? What a fault you have led me into committing! Doubtless I can blame myself for my weakness; it was great, it was inexcusable; but without your bad advice, God be my witness that I would never have thought of telling a lie.

Prévannes. I am quite convinced of that.

Marguerite. Well, sir, what use is a lie?

Prévannes. I am overpowered, do not crush me.

The Countess. And so, sir, what do you expect?

Prévannes. To do what, madame?

The Countess. What! have I not told you? Go to Monsieur de Valbrun's house.

Prévannes. It would be useless. I would not find him there.

The Countess. Why not?

Prévannes. Because he is on his way here.

The Countess. Are you out of your senses? And this letter?

Prévannes. It is because of this letter that I look for him.

The Countess. He has sworn never to see me again.

Prévannes. It will be as I say; he can not keep away.

The Countess. I have already told you that your jokes are unseasonable.

Prévannes. I am not joking at all. Ah! you imagine, beautiful lady, you imagine that a man loses a woman like you, goes off, forgets her, diverts himself! . . . No, indeed! No, indeed! It costs him a greater sacrifice; it does not happen thus. You do not understand us, who are also lovers! While we are talking here, do you know what poor Valbrun is doing? In the first place, he went home furious; he swore vengeance on me, on you, on every one, . . . then he wept . . . oh! he can weep. Then he walked up and down his room taking great strides; he thought he would go on a voyage, but to avoid that trouble he contemplated blowing his brains out. Then, for form's sake alone, he saw quite well that he could not die without

seeing you for the last time. He also thought of writing to you; but what volume of words would be worth one look from the beloved? Then he took up and laid down his hat a hundred times—in other words, my hat—at last, taking courage, he put it on his head, and resolved to leave his house; once in the street, trouble, vexation, a righteous indignation, have perhaps delayed him; nevertheless, he is on his way, he is near, he can not now retrace his steps; he is too near to you, he is within the influence of your fascination; he can not help coming to see you; his heart entices him, and . . . stay, stay; see, he is entering the yard.

The Countess. Is this true?

Prévannes. Look for yourself.

The Countess (*troubled*). Monsieur de Prévannes . . . He is coming.

Prévannes. Ah! yes, just as I told you. You know how carefully he usually mounts your stairs. But as he is now in despair, he can go up much quicker.

The Countess. Monsieur de Prévannes . .

Prévannes. I hear you. You do not wish to be seen at first. Am I not right? I shall take it upon me to receive him.

The Countess. Take care, lest . . .

Prévannes. Fear nothing; retire to a little distance, and remember what I just told you; either you may take me for the worst of men,

or we shall all be married . . . when you please.

(*He salutes Marguerite.*)

Marguerite. I said nothing.

The Countess. Come, Marguerite.

Prévannes. Do not go too far away. I have only two or three words to say to him.

The Countess. Two or three words?

Prévannes. No more; do not go far away.

Scene XIV

(*Prévannes, alone, then Valbrun.*)

Prévannes (*alone*). Now, Valbrun, between us two! You have vexed me and retarded my plans this long while; this time, zounds! I have you in my grasp, and alive or dead you shall marry.

Valbrun. Is this you, monsieur?

Prévannes. As you see. Perhaps it is not I you are looking for?

Valbrun. Pardon me, sir, it is you yourself, and you doubtless know what I have to say to you.

Prévannes. Not yet, but it only depends on you. . . .

Valbrun. I return you your hat.

Prévannes (*taking his hat*). Much obliged. I was uneasy about it.

Valbrun (*showing him his letter*). Is this letter in your handwriting?

Prévannes. Yes, sir.

Valbrun. And you are fully aware how insulting this is to me.

Prévannes. I do not think it concerns you.

Valbrun. And I suppose you also know by what name the man who wrote it deserves to be called!

Prévannes. By what name? . . . The name is at the end.

Valbrun. Yes, sir; it is the name of a man I have loved from my childhood, in whom I had implicit confidence, to whom I have always confided my most sacred and inmost thoughts, and whom I can now call by no other name than traitor and faithless friend.

Prévannes. Let us pass over these details, if you please.

Valbrun. He has not only betrayed me, but to do it he has made use of my friendship and my confidence.

Prévannes. Let us pass over this, I beg of you.

Valbrun. Are you trying to joke with me?

Prévannes. No, sir; I swear.

Valbrun. What reply do you make to excuse your conduct in this house?

Prévannes. I see nothing bad in it.

Valbrun. Doubtless. . . . It has been the cause of your success! And apparently you have risen above such small considerations as good faith and delicacy, that other men . . .

Prévannes. A thousand pardons. I have already asked you to pass over that. You may be forgiven for being vexed for a moment or so, but you should not abuse that privilege.

Valbrun. If it comes to this, sir, I do not know but you deserve more.

Prévannes. That may be, but I have heard enough, and if you have nothing else to add . . .

Valbrun. What I have to add is very plain. I ask for satisfaction.

Prévannes. I refuse to give it.

Valbrun. You refuse? . . . I did not know that Monsieur de Prévannes required to be provoked twice before drawing his sword.

Prévannes. He might be provoked a hundred times, if he did not wish to draw it.

Valbrun. And on what pretext do you refuse?

Prévannes. What pretext? And under what pretext do you consider yourself offended?

Valbrun. What! you took the countess away from me.

Prévannes. Are you her relative, or her lover, or her husband, or only one of her friends?

Valbrun. I am . . . yes, I am one of

her friends, one of those who love her most, and I have the right . . .

Prévannes. Permit me to speak for a moment. It is true I have courted the countess; but do you think that is any reason why I should fight with all my friends? . . .

Valbrun. I am more than a friend to her . . . I want to marry her. . . .

Prévannes. Why then have you not done so? Who hindered you?

Valbrun. Who hindered me, when all my love, all my faith in a promise given was only used as a joke by you! When you took pleasure in seeing me fall in the trap that you laid for me! When you took advantage of my patient credulity, day by day! When you both, even then, doubtless, working together, while I, alone with my suffering, alone, if one can ever be alone when in love! . . .

Prévannes. We are returning to preliminaries.

Valbrun. Edward! You it is who have treated me thus.

Prévannes. I believe, sir, I think you just called me by another name.

Valbrun. Yes, sir, you are right. You recall my words to me, and as you are not pleased to reply . . .

Prévannes. I never reply to words that mean nothing, inconsistent and senseless.

Valbrun. That mean nothing! You are the one who refuses to fight.

Prévannes. I do not absolutely refuse. I ask on what grounds you provoke me to fight?

Valbrun. Well! As things are as they are . . .

Prévannes. Yes, indeed! Once more I ask if you are a brother, a lover, or a husband of the countess, and if you are none of these, I shall pay no attention to your bragging. I am not so anxious to fight with any one . . .

Valbrun. Any one, just Heaven!

Prévannes. Ah! doubtless; what more are you? A friend of the family, agreed; an agreeable acquaintance, doubtless, met perhaps somewhat too often at the house of a pretty woman who is vivacious, giddy, and somewhat perfidious, and I acknowledge, also, of a rather doubtful reputation . . .

Valbrun. Do you speak in this way of the countess?

Prévannes. Why not? Do you intend to pick a quarrel with me on this point also.

Valbrun. Yes. Zounds! it is too much! I could stand your cold and cruel jokes, but you are insulting a woman whom I esteem, and whom you ought to respect, as you say you are in love with her. Come, sir, let us enter her house. You say I have not the right to defend her; well! I shall ask her to return me the right I had but

yesterday, even for one moment. She will grant, I do not doubt, this right that I have lost, that you have taken from me. Perfidious as she is, I know her heart, and notwithstanding all your treachery, I have loved her so dearly that she ought to love me still. I wish to be her husband; I might almost say I am! May she let me take it for a quarter of an hour, so that I can demand satisfaction of you! Come, sir, let us enter.

(*He advances so as to open the door of the room of the countess.*)

Prévannes (*stopping him*). Say, now, Henry. Do you remember that this morning I compared you to an ass who dared not go down to the brook?

Valbrun. What does that mean?

Prévannes. Ah! here is the brook; this is the door; go push it open! We have come here through much trouble.

(*He pushes open the door. The countess and Marguerite enter.*)

Scene XV

(*Prévannes, Valbrun, the Countess, Marguerite.*)

Prévannes. Come, come, perfidious countess. Here is a gallant gentleman who claims the title

of husband, he says, only for a quarter of an hour, so as to have the right to send me under ground.

Valbrun. Is it possible that I am treated in this outrageous manner.

Marguerite. Ah, God! I have been so frightened.

Prévannes. Then you were listening to us?

Marguerite. Yes, yes.

The Countess. Monsieur de Valbrun, I have done you great wrong. Your friend gave me bad advice, and I ask your pardon for having followed it.

Prévannes. Not so bad, madame. You must at least acknowledge that I have given you my word.

(*To Valbrun.*)

My friend, pardon me also, because you have wronged me so greatly.

Valbrun. Ah! madame, I alone am to blame for doubting you for a moment.

(*He kisses her hand.*)

Prévannes (*to Marguerite*). And as for us, Margot, we forgive each other.

Marguerite. If I consent, it is out of kindness of heart.

Prévannes. And I out of pure compassion. . . . Come, let us try to console ourselves for all the trouble we have caused.

1855.

THE POET AND THE PROSE-WRITER

Poets rarely write reflections, but prose-writers are chiefly valued in proportion as they make use of them. Nevertheless, the poet should be able to reflect even more than the prose-writer, because in order to express his thought, whatever it may be, if we except riming, he must labor a long while. For, when working thus, a great many different kinds of commentaries and corollaries necessarily pass before him—unless we suppose an idiot who sets other people's thoughts to rime. These corollaries are more or less good, brilliant, just, and seductive; they turn one aside, bring one back again, solve difficulties, and are enchanting: they are the veins, the mines, from which the prose-writer draws his inspiration, they are the reflection in a prison, for the poet. A poet should possess an inspired soul, a maternal instinct. In clinging to this can he make up his mind to lose the fruit of reflection? If he has only four lines to write they must contain these qualities; for these qualities are what constitute poetry, in other words, something that sets people thinking. In all wonderful verses written by a true poet, there can be

found two or three times as much as he says; the reader must fill out what has not been said, according to his thoughts, his strength, his taste.

If we discuss melody, every one feels it, from behind the scenes in *La Scala,* where the women are supported under the girandoles, to the fences of La Beauce, where the oxen stop when they hear the shepherd's whistle. In melody, above all, is the poet's chief delight. Poetry is so essentially musical that no matter how beautiful the thought may be, the poet will recoil from it if it is expressed harshly, and making this his excuse, he will end by not only having melodious words, but melodious thoughts. Any one writing in prose should have, so to say, a taste that forbids the use of discords, and a certain seeking after euphony that results in grouping the words well: but let the writer pay too much attention to this, and a puerility results which takes away from the strength of the thought. One word suffices to prove this; prose has no determined rhythm, and without rhythm there is no melody. For the moment a method is adopted that is not necessary to reach the desired goal, what good is it?

What might be said of a man, hurrying to transact some business, making up his mind to take mincing steps like a dancer as he walked in the streets? This is somewhat the method the prose-writer adopts when he uses too many cadences: for he is also in a hurry to say what he

thinks, and nothing more. The poet, on the contrary, takes rhythm and measure for his first and indispensable law. His talent is totally dependent on these laws, and rhythm is on his lips, measure in his throat; without these he is mute. Let us reason further. I do not propose to make a comparison, by which to prove that the prose-writer is a pedestrian and the poet a cavalier. I want to say that their natures are totally different, almost opposed to each other, antipathetic. That is so true that it is not rare to see among readers people of ability, intelligent and witty, with perfect taste in regard to prose, but who understand nothing of poetry. Other people, on the contrary, quite ignorant, and knowing nothing of letters, lose themselves, they know not why, in the sound of a rime, so much so that they can not weigh the value of a thought when it is expressed in verse. What does this signify? We must acknowledge that the difference in form is not enough to induce such a great dislike on one hand, and on the other such a strong predilection.

The novelist, the dramatic writer, the moralist, the historian, the philosopher, see the bearing of things; the poet seizes the essence. His pure, inborn genius searches native forces. His thought is a spring that leaps from the earth; it does not demand him to meddle in politics and to reason about things that occur within two feet

of him; he ignores the play of fancy and the variations of the human race; he only knows one man, the man of all time. The poet never imagined that the earth went round the sun; he is indifferent to public events, neglecting even his own interests; the works of nature suffice for him. The smallest being, the least creature, excite his curiosity, by the mere fact that they exist. The great Goethe put down his pen to examine a pebble and gazed at it for hours; he knew that in everything there is a divine spark. Thus does the poet, and to him even inanimate things seem to have their silent thoughts. While the wandering dreamers try to give vent to their inspirations by using bombastic expressions and a meaningless number of words, the poet takes great pains as to the form in which to present his thoughts, and tries to express the greatest thoughts. His life consists in observing, feeling, and explaining; everything speaks to him; he converses with a blade of grass; in every form that strikes his eye, even in the most symmetrical, he takes and nourishes incessantly the love of supreme beauty; in every sentiment he feels, in every movement he sees, he looks for eternal truth. So he is born and so he will die, as simple as can be; at the height of his glory, the last look he casts upon this world will still be that of a child.

1839.

LETTERS

I

To Monsieur Paul Foucher, in Paris

No, my old friend, I have not forgotten you; your misfortunes have not estranged me from you, and you will always find me ready to respond to you, if you ask for tears or for mirth, if you wish me to participate in your joy or in your sorrow. If you, for one moment, thought that your friendship bored me, you were mistaken; were I in your place such an idea would never have occurred to me. And, besides, do you think that I am more favored by fortune than you are? Listen, my dear friend, listen while I give an account of myself.

I scarcely finished my examinations, when I thought of the pleasures awaiting me here. My diploma as Bachelor was put in my pocket with my stage ticket, and the one waited for the other. Here I am at Mans; I visit at the houses of the beautiful women in the neighborhood; everything is going on marvelously well. They took me to an old château. My grandmother had another attack of a distressing catarrh that troubled

her six months ago. I received a letter telling me she was dangerously ill, and a week later a second letter telling me to put on mourning. Just see how it is with the pleasures and happiness of this life! I can not tell you what dreadful reflections were caused by this sudden death. Two weeks before, I left her seated in a large rocking-chair, talking in an animated manner and in full health, and now the earth covers her body. The tears shed by those who surrounded her will soon be dried, and that will no doubt be the lot that awaits us all. When I die I do not want any feigned regrets, or any sadness that is put off with the mourning garb. I would prefer my bones being thrown to the winds; all tears which are feigned, or quickly dried, are but horrible mockery.

My brother has left for Paris. I am alone in this château, where I can speak to no one except my uncle, who, I must say, is very kind to me; but the ideas of a white-haired man are not those of a young one. He is extremely learned; when I speak to him about dramas that I like, or verses that appeal to me, he replies: "Would you not prefer reading these sentiments in some good book? They are always set forth in a truer and more exact manner."

You who have read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* know what effect the wise and learned Polonius had on him. And still he was a good man, loved

by every one; he was not one of those people for whom the brook is nothing but running water, in the forest nothing but different kinds of wood and hundreds of fagots. May heaven bless such people; perhaps they are happier than you and I.

I am bored, and I am tired. I believe you are in no better spirits than I; but I have not even the ambition to work. Ah! what shall I do? Shall I return to the customs of bygone days? Shall I become quaint in spite of myself and my verses? Since I have read the newspapers (which is my only diversion here), I can not tell why everything in them seems to me so utterly worthless. I can not tell whether it is the quibbles of the commentators or the stupid whims of those who arrange the articles that disgust me, but I would prefer not writing unless I could be a Shakespeare or a Schiller. And so I do nothing, and I feel that the greatest misfortune that can overtake a man who is capable of quick inspiration is to lack that inspiration. I am not in love. I am not occupied in any way, and nothing holds me here. I would sell my life for two sous if I could leave it without passing through death.

And so I continue to reflect in this sad strain. But I have the French spirit, I feel it. Were I to see a pretty woman I would forget all the philosophical reflections amassed in a month of misanthrophy. Let her glance coquettishly at

me, and I would adore her for—at least six months. I hope I shall improve by age, for I am good for nothing.

I would give twenty-five francs if I could have one of Shakespeare's plays in English with me here. These newspapers are so insipid—these critics are so dull! Make plans, my friend, establish rules; you are only working on the cold monuments of the past. If a man of genius were to step forth he would overturn your scaffolding, and laugh at your poetic ideas. At times I feel tempted to take up the pen and spoil one or two sheets of paper; but the first obstacle rebuffs me, and a strong disinclination makes me stretch my arms and shut my eyes. Why must I stay here all this time? I long to see a pretty woman; I long for a pretty foot and dainty figure; I long to love some one. I would love my cousin who is old and ugly, were she not so pedantic and economical.

And so I write to tell you how disgusted and bored I am. You are the only link with things that inspire me and make me think, you are the only one who awakens me from my lethargy, and leads me toward an ideal that weakness has led me to forget. I have no inclination to think anything. If I were in Paris just now I would drown the little talent yet left me in punch and beer, and I would feel comforted.

A man who is ill is given opium to put him

to sleep, even if sleep will be fatal to him. I reason in the same fashion about my soul.

I suppose there are some old-wigged methodical heads here who would say to me: "My child these sentiments belong to your youth. When I was young I felt the same. You need a little diversion, not much, and then you can study law, and go into a lawyer's office." I feel like strangling these people. Nature has endowed mankind with every bad quality: the viper and the owl are horrible creatures; but tell me, you anatomists who dissect valves, tell me if a man capable of feeling and loving, who separates himself from all elevating influences, who calls love a pastime, and studying law important, is not a polypus?

You see I write down everything I happen to think of; write the same to me, I pray you. I need your letters; I wish to know what your inmost thoughts are, as you know mine. Doubtless they are much alike. We are both animated by the same spirit. Why did he who gave it to us leave it so imperfect? I can not endure this mingling of happiness and sadness, this amalgamation of mire and of heaven. Whence comes the harmony if the instrument be not touched? I am cast down, weary, unmercifully bored with my own thoughts. Only one resource is left me, and that is to write them down. But perhaps I shall leave in a few days. Where shall I go?

I have not the least idea. If I return to Mans, I shall find every one in the depths of grief; my grandmother dead, the entire family in tears, mamma, my uncle (Desherbiers); and in the midst of all this my grandfather asking every minute: "Where is my wife?" and adding, "I hope she is not ill."

By the bye, I have obtained, so it seems, the highest honors at Monsieur Caron's! Happy, thrice happy, is he who can take even a passing pleasure in such good fortune! Why has nature given me a thirst for the ideal that will never be realized? No, my friend, I can not believe it; I am so proud; neither you nor I are destined to become more than estimable lawyers, intelligent attorneys. In the depths of my soul is an instinct that tells me this. I still dream of happiness, although just now I am extremely unhappy. I await your reply impatiently, and I hope with all my heart that you will be able to make it in person.

Good-by, my dear friend,

Yours faithfully,

ALFRED.

AU CHATEAU DE COGNERS, SEPTEMBER 23, 1827.

II

To Monsieur Desherbiers, in Mans

I send you, my dear uncle, these poems, some of which you have heard. To read them and to hear them recited are two different things, as you know; but you will not criticize them more severely than I do, and I want you to tell me very frankly what you think of them.

I ask pardon for having used ambiguous phrases, for I expected to alter them. You will find some weak rimes; I had an end in view in this and knew what I was about when using them; but I found it impossible to separate myself from this riming school, that wishes to reconstruct everything, and pays attention to form alone, thinking thereby to reconstruct by putting on a coat of plaster.

My preface is conceited, which is necessary to produce the effect; but it attacks no one, and it may readily be understood in different ways.

As to the short rhythm of the verses, I think they are not objectionable in what might be called the recitative, which is the transition of sentiments or actions. I think they should occur but rarely in the other parts. Still Racine used them.

I shall ask you to pay more attention to the construction than to details; for I am far from

having a restrained style. I shall change it probably a hundred times.

I have erased several rather too materialistic sentiments from my last poem, and leave *dandysme* to dominate, thinking it less dangerous. I try to avoid making enemies, and probably shall not succeed; but I think that just now my father, who reads the newspapers very carefully, is more afraid of this than I am. The just critic gives one inspiration and enthusiasm. The unjust critic is not to be feared. In any event, I have concluded to go ahead and not answer them a word.

At first, this seems extremely amusing: I can not help laughing about it every time they attack me.

I await your advice. My friends have given me praise that I value for what it is worth. It is due to four or five conversations with you that I have changed my opinions on very important points; and since then I have made some other very important reflections. But you know that I have not gone so far yet as admiring Racine.

Good-by, then, my good uncle. Love me always and believe that I return it from the depths of my heart. I have only one regret, and that is, that you are not near me to serve as my guide and friend. Your nephew,

ALFRED DE MUSSET.

JANUARY, 1830.

III

To His Brother, at Aix, in Savoy

My Dear Brother:

Yesterday morning I went to see our neighbor, Alfred Belmont, mounted on the top of the stage-coach. He arrived from Aix, where he said he left you suffering from a cold which you took while going to Chartreuse. That was just like you. In writing to my mother, be careful about referring to your cold. She is still extremely anxious when you take one step outside the door. You ask me how I employ my time. I do not employ it; I pass it, or kill it, which is a very difficult thing. Nevertheless, I dare say we argue a great deal; it seems to me that people spend too much time arguing and splitting hairs. I met Eugène Delacroix one evening when returning from the theater. We talked about painting while out in the street, and we walked from his door to mine and from mine to his, until two o'clock in the morning; it seemed as though we could not separate. I talked on the boulevard with good Anthony Deschamps from eight until ten o'clock in the evening. When I leave Nodier's, or Achille's (Devéria's) house, I talk the whole way with one or the other of them. Are we any wiser for this? Does it help us to write a better verse in a poem, to make

a better outline of a picture! Every one of us has within him a certain tone that he can sound, just as a violin, or a clarionette has. All the reasoning imaginable can not bring forth from the throat of a blackbird the song of a starling. The thing necessary for an artist or a poet is emotion. When I feel a certain beating of my heart while writing a verse, I am sure that it is the best I am capable of writing.

Sunday, after dinner, I was yawning like a fool in the principal walk of the Tuileries, when I perceived the Misses —— seated under a potted orange-tree. I spoke to them, and took a seat beside the youngest. She wore a small white hat trimmed with green ribbons. In everything she said she was charmingly untutored. In her glance could be seen something indefinably fresh and tender, of which she was entirely unconscious. She is no more conscious of the feeling of love within her than a flower is of its perfume. There is something indefinable in a young girl's beauty. I stayed an hour by the side of this child; it seemed as though I had glided within the shelter of the wings of my guardian angel. On leaving these ladies, because the bell rang, I went to the Café de Paris. There I found Monsieur M——; he was wagering that he could smoke two cigars at the same time, until they were finished, without taking them out of his mouth, or expectorating. This

seemed to me so foolish that I left. Horace de V—— accompanied me to my door. He told me something I did not know before, which is that since my last verses have appeared, every one says I am converted—converted to what? Do they imagine that I have confessed to Abbé Delisle, or that I was converted to grace while reading *La Harpe?* People doubtless expect me to say, "Arm thy arm with the blade of the homicide, and end thy days," instead of "Take thy sword and kill thyself." Ridiculous nonsense! I would much rather recommence the *Marrons du feu* and *Mardoche.*

Good-by, my dear brother. I know that there are a great many pretty women bathing at Aix, Madame de V——, Madame d'A——, etc., and may you make a conquest of some of these ladies. I authorize you to embrace them all for me.

Your brother and friend,

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1834. ALF. M.

IV

TO MONSIEUR ÉMILE DESCHAMPS

SIR: DECEMBER 17, 1832.

If the bad verses have not frightened you and old Christmas does not find you at a feast, I shall consider it very kind and good of you to listen to some poems that have the greatest need

of consideration. I ask you two things which will be easy for you to grant: courtesy and indulgence.

I have given you my word. Do not make me break it, or this good comradeship that is such a comfort to some and such a source of sorrow to others.

I beg you to believe in my entire devotion to you. A. DE MUSSET.

V

To Monsieur Maxine Jaubert

SIR:

I tried, this morning, to change something in the strophe you gave me, as you were not satisfied with it. After turning it around in every possible way, I find I can not improve it, and that it must remain as it was. Nevertheless, I send you the result of my efforts, and then you, in your turn, can see what you can do.

If it be necessary to preserve the general sense by retaining the first verse, as a link with the preceding strophe, one might write:

> That egotism alone of sorrow be the prey,
> When the wise at the banquet abandons himself to joy,
> That on the passing billow he scatter his bread,
> He will find it again on a day of want.
> Misfortune wears a veil and no man on Earth
> Is sure of the morrow.

This strophe is perhaps a more exact imitation of the passage in Ecclesiastes. The expression *qu'il répande son pain,* is that of the French text. However, we must not insist on this too strongly, for in the following verse, which contains the thought in the last two verses, there is—in *Lemaistre de Sacy*—a positively contrary meaning. The text reads: *Quia ignoras quid futurum sit mali super terram;* and the French translation is: "*Parce que vous ignorez le mal qui* doit venir *sur le terre.*" (Because you ignore the evil that should come on this earth.) This is quite another thing; I think it should have been, "What evil *may come.*"

If another paraphrase of these two verses could be introduced in the piece, leaving out the first verse, we might still say:

> None knows of what evils his destiny threatens him,
> Throw a piece of bread into the passing stream;
> The waves, that are God's, will not swallow it up.
> Let them carry it to the foreign shore,
> And, long hence, perhaps on a day of want
> Thou wilt there find it again.

If you prefer taking exclusively the philosophic passages of Scripture, and develop them on this line; still we might say:

> Who can foresee the evils hanging over his head?
> When you are sitting at the banquet feast,
> Throw into the passing water some of your bread.
> Let the poor have his share of what God gives you,
> That some day he who gives alms
> Opens also his hand to you.

But in that case, when we return to the text nothing is left of it. This proves that improvement is opposed to evil, as I told you the other day; add to this, that good is opposed to evil, as I also told you, and you will be of the same opinion as I—that is to say, in the same position as the courtiers, who after having deliberated for three days when they would cut off the king's nose, decided they would cut it off on the first opportunity that presented itself.

And so, sir, cut out and erase as much as you choose in what I send you. You will end by retaining all that is good in these strophes, which are yours; and it is my advice that you make the selection. I beg you to see nothing in this scrawl but my desire of making myself agreeable to you; perhaps another time I shall be able to make a better deduction, if you will kindly write me when I can be of service to you.

Your very devoted,

ALF. DE MUSSET.

WEDNESDAY.

Below is the Latin text of the two verses which compose this strophe:

"Mitte panem tuum super transeuntes aquas: quia post tempora multa invenies illum."

"Da partem septem necnon et octo: quia ignoras quid futurum sit mali super terram."

(Ecclesiastes, Ch. xi).

VI

To His Godmother

Madame:

You made a great mistake, madame, not to go to the Theater Français this evening. Rosine was not hoydenish, but she was very clever, and coquettish enough, even very coquettish. The exit was made in a most charming manner. And this is how is was done: She had just finished reading Lindor's note: the act had ended; she was on the stage alone. The note read, and the last word spoken, there is nothing left for the actress to do but to leave the stage; so she makes her exit. The orchestra plays a waltz. For instead of leaving the stage in the usual way, that is, leaving the stage empty for the entre-act, see what Rosine did this evening.

She walked along slowly, holding in her hand Lindor's note, reading it over again, turning around on the stage, by herself, not uttering a word; and this she continued for about five minutes. The audience did not stir, their eyes followed the young lady, whose movements were not very quick, as she turned and read the letter over and over again in spite of the entre-act and the orchestra. At length she made her exit and every one applauded her. What do you think of that? How bold, calculated, affected and perfectly natural it was! and how feminine!

But you may call this tradition, and say it is done every day. No, madame; I have seen the *Barber of Séville* a hundred times, God help me, and I never saw the actress go off the stage in this manner.

Well, you then say, it is one of Mademoiselle Mars' ideas.

Well! what do I care? It is charming. And it is something to dare to do it, to be able to make the audience hold its breath until the instant the entre-act begins, to dare to remain on the stage after every actor starts to go, when she had nothing more to say, when the boys were waiting restlessly to cry "lemonade." My faith, to attempt so much, to do it, and to succeed!

This letter, which is not dated, was certainly written in 1836, for it refers to Mademoiselle Plessy, who for the first time appeared in the rôle of Rosine at the Comédie-Française, the 20th of May of this same year.

VII

To His Godmother

Madame:

This is the truth. The princess wrote me that she can not find a suitable subject in the story I told you, and this is the reason: "The foundation of the tale is neither extraordinary nor gay. To counteract this the details are very comic; but how can the details be given without employing

the *dramatis personæ*. It must be given up, she concludes, unless Madame J—— finds some way to do it.

In former times, madame, you were counselor, by right of conquest, be counselor now, I pray you, for the love of *belles-lettres*. As far as I am concerned I see but one way, which I have proposed; which is, to keep the facts as far as possible, the characters *idem*, and change the men to women and *vice versâ*. What do you think of this? I have already tried it and found it good. Really laughable things as well as true sentiment have little or no sex. But find a better way if you can; and if, thanks to you, it can be arranged, you will render a real service to your very coughing and stuffed-up servant.

ALF. M.

FEBRUARY 27, 1837.

VIII

To His Godmother

MADAME:

I was not able to get seats for to-night. There is nothing so bad as relying on others. Instead of going to the concert,* I am at my own fireside. I beg you to write to me, so that I can say I have heard from you without telling an untruth.

* The first public concert given by Mademoiselle Garcia.

I am really sorry that I was not there, for two reasons. The first is, that I should have been more than entertained; the second is, that I would have written something about it—whether good or bad, prose or verse—which would have served as a sequence to my article on Rachel. It would have given me great pleasure if I could have written about them both in one article. One knowing five languages, playing her own accompaniments very readily, and also with dignity and grace, etc.; the other governed by her instincts, an ignorant person, a real Bohemian princess—a bit of ashes in which is seen the sacred fire, etc. They evidently bear some relation to each other, the same starting-point, and two such different paths, the same end in view and two such different results. These would have produced rare sensations difficult for me to express in my best style. There were no front seats and I did not take a box, as I half counted on having a front seat. Half!!! a meaningless word! Nevertheless it is the principal reason for many things. My compliments.

SATURDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 15, 1838.

IX

To His Godmother

Madame:

You are mistaken, my dear godmother, on thinking that I count on you. I was not able—any more than you—to see anything but good-will without any possible result in the proposition of the counselor. My friend Tattet should have reserved a front seat, but they were all taken. After hearing my brother's account of the concert, I imagined it was just as you described it. I do not care so much for Bériot in it, but I did not want the young girl sacrificed. It is most likely that this will be the universal opinion.

As you are pleased with my idea of comparing the two actresses, try to realize your good intentions by letting me see Paulette once more (I continue to call her by that name, instead of Pauline). You understand that if this is to amount to anything, it must not be a rimed amplification of an imaginary theme. It must be felt to the foundation. Besides, you know that I am, and always will be, foolish enough to be conscientious about it. I would rather write one simple page very badly than a poem under false pretenses.

As for the *petite* (little one) as she is called at the Theater Français, I know her rather well.

I would like to cross swords with Paulette for a quarter of an hour, after which I would muse at my ease. Truly, I think there is a breeze in the artistic circle at this present moment. Classical tradition was a charming state of affairs, the flood of romanticism has become a deluge, in the midst of which there is some good. To-day we have found pure unadulterated truth. I would readily give a hundred crowns, as Vernet says, if, twenty years from now, I could take advantage of this commotion, to flee with Paulette and Rachel, until lost in the clouds with them. I am very old for such a journey, and on many an occasion my wings have been clipped. But no matter: if I can not follow them, I can at least see them start, and drink a farewell glass to their health. Can we not drink together on that, my dear godmother?

I am finishing my novel, and that is the reason why I have not been to see you. A thousand thanks as ever, and a thousand tokens of affection as ever.

ALF. M.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1838.

X

To His Godmother

Madame:

How are you, my dear godmother, and what are you doing now? I want so much to hear from you in some way, and to know what people in active life are doing. Just now I am the most tiresome invalid. Unfortunately I have recovered, and am no longer treated as a sick person; at the same time I have not strength enough as yet to hold my own with people in health. My mind is made up. The nun who nursed me has left, so that I am alone, face to face with virtue and the milk of almonds. I am not bored, for I am at work; but really I am rather sad.

Without taking into consideration this good girl to whom I have become accustomed, you have so completely spoiled me during my illness, that I am tempted to take to my bed again, so that I might see you. In other respects I might say things are progressing quietly: the business that worried me is being settled slowly, still it is being settled. My wise schemes have taken more firmly hold of me than ever. I only need a little more strength and some sunlight, which is lacking this bad weather.

May you who always remember your friends

in their misfortunes, not forget me, I pray, in my prosperity.

The compliments of gum sirup.

ALF. M.

SATURDAY, THE END OF MARCH, 1840.

XI

TO HIS BROTHER, AT CHATEAU DE LOREY, NEAR PACY-SUR-EURE

DEAR BROTHER:

O man more blasé than Griboville! do you think that I do not see what your object is in telling me about the charming landscape you see from your window? Through your enthusiastic description, I see a sermon to draw me to the country. Well, then, I have left the stupid Paris that I adore. I have been to Bury; I have once more seen the woods that I loved so well two years ago. I have reveled in verdure. We drank our coffee in the open air and played lots; what amusement could be more innocent? Because my debts must be paid, you think I ought to pack up and leave. This reasoning is too deep for me. I know many people who have paid their debts, without ever leaving Pacy.

I shall finish my verses one of these days to Sister Marceline,* perhaps next year, ten years

* The sister of Bon-Secours, who nursed him during his illness.

hence, when I choose; but I shall never publish them, and I do not even care to write them. I have gone too far in reciting them to you. I said so much to idlers, and I have so much more to say to them, that I have a good right, once in my life to write a few strophes for my private perusal. The admiration and gratitude I feel toward this pious sister will never be sullied by being put in print. I have made this decision, so do not speak to me again on the subject. Madame de Castries approves of my course; she says it is a good thing to have a secret drawer in the soul, provided one only puts pure thoughts in it.

Tell our cousins that I may visit them in the autumn. My mother should have sent you two letters yesterday. One of them was from Barre, who is still here spending a few days with us, doing some drawing. Good-by, my dear friend; do not stay too long at Lorey.

Your brother and friend,

MONDAY, JUNE, 1840. ALF. M.

XII

To His Godmother

MADAME:

This is just the way with you women: you think when a man does not write he must be in love, in other words, happy; it seems to me one should come to the opposite conclusion.

If I were to lean on my left elbow, and say to you: I went last Tuesday to Madame de C——'s. Madame G. was there, and then Madame S. came in. We flirted a little, and the poet was sent home in an open barouche."

But that was nothing. The other day, as the moon was rising, he had a stroll *à la* Lamartine, with lake, shadows, chestnut-trees, travesties, etc.

" Bah! with my own initials?

No, madame, with other initials."

But that is nothing. If I were to tell you about the plump figure, the low sleeves, the reserve, the melancholy, the laces, the rare good fortune, would you have any doubt about the kind of romantic chapter I could write? And all that on the stairs, the bell in my hand!

But this amounts to nothing. Were I to tell you that this proud young girl fastened her eyes on the godson, and fearing that he would not notice it, made him notice her!

Well! this is worse than nothing. If I were to lean on the other elbow, and add: "My faith, she looks very pretty on the blue sofa, with her blond hair and her black eyes."

Ah! well then?

What is this to you? And the proof of what I say is, that her husband loves me. Yes, he has taken a great liking to me, and he stopped me on the boulevard, when I was in a great hurry—I had only spoken three words to him before

this—and the good God sent rain down on our heads at this particular moment. The shaking of hands, and invitations, coming, as it were, from the clouds, etc. Would you not exclaim with me, under like circumstances: "I do not know this man very well, but he likes me extremely, and his wife is very agreeable?"

But do not imagine that this will amount to anything.

Ah, well, who can tell whether all this nonsense, this foppishness, this gossip, will not amuse you, and if you will not find that I am excusable for having let my ink dry while all these things were taking place?

Or if I say to you frankly, or rather foolishly: "I am alone and sad. These dreams are but dreams, and after all I only live when some heart answers mine?"

I am sending you a very peculiar letter. On reading it over I am reminded of a student in Henry IV College, who, to take off the professor, wrote a wordy article in which every paragraph began with: "I shall not tell you that, etc. I might be able to tell you that," etc. The student's name was Évrard; he was expelled from his class. I can tell you, however, that I am your very much honored godson.

Yours forever and something more.

THURSDAY EVENING. JULY, 1840.

XIII

To His Godmother

Madame:

If you know why you replied to my letter so soon and so well, you can readily understand why I wait so long and then send such an unsatisfactory answer. In the first place, summon your common sense, your calmness, your natural gaiety, your little *farniente* always busy about something, then, but what am I saying? Everything in you that is willing. Remove all this, as one removes a stocking, to put it on again. That is my position, as one of my friends says. Be assured that when I do not write to you, it is not that I am forgetful, lazy, or absorbed in pleasures, but simply because I can not write anything.

In the first place, there is the story of the *Musicale et dentifrice.* Alas! my godmother, these charming nothings that you write me about, I value greatly. They recall the time when I took so much pleasure in the little pearls that fall from your lips when you laugh, or that drop from the end of your pen whenever you dip it in the ink. Every day I am ambitious to be in the world.

You ask me for a comment, what you call "a title for a chapter." I admire the assurance of women like you. Of all the nonsense I have written you, the tale of the staircase may be considered the least foolish or the most serious, if it amounted to anything, but unfortunately it is not, and never will amount to, anything. As to the sacred story, it might be taken from the Old Testament. I can not tell you the story of the staircase, because it is such a little thing, such a nothing, that it would take fifteen pages to tell it.

She returned! this dreadful captain met her. The new play at the Opera Comique * is sad enough. I had almost reached it when I met Clavaroche in a pelting rain, for I started out in it.

Can you imagine hearing *Se il padre m'abbandona,* sung in French, in fantastic Scotch costumes, with leggings, skirts half-way to the knees, and sung quite rapidly, probably so as not to resemble Pasta or Malibran, etc.

Yes, madame, this brunette whose portrait in pencil hangs over my head as I write, has returned. Do you really think I love her? Do you suppose that there is anything left of the taste I thought I possessed? Bah! I am well cured of this; and when the godson of my godmother in his turn shall be outlined on his own

* *L'Opéra à la Cour,* a kind of dramatic pot-pourri.

tombstone, the following shall be written beneath:

EPITAPH TO AN UNKOWN PERSON

"Here lies a man who when to the Opera Comique the 30th of July, 1840. He wanted to go on the 28th, but the theater was closed on account of the festivals, and that is why he went two evenings later. He sat in a dark proscenium-box by himself. And he saw in front of him—quite near—a young woman, a brunette. This was the second time in his life that he had attended the Opera Comique; and it was impossible for him to tell why, having despised this theater, he had such a strong desire to go there ever since the 28th, that on the 30th he borrowed the money from his brother to buy a ticket, as he would not have money enough until the following day. And in this proscenium-box, which was very large, being all alone and greatly bored, he looked around the hall, and thought he saw this same brunette in a front seat; but he could not possibly think it was she, because he believed she was engaged in Milan for Automnino, in other words, the end of August. Leaving the theater, much moved, he met, in the rain, a captain with whom he was well acquainted. This captain told him that he had met this same brunette a few days previously at Paris, and that it was really she, and not a hallucination produced by the

music. Then the unfortunate man went in his house, and smoked a great many cigarettes.

"Pray for him!"

I grasp your hand in despair.

JULY 31, 1840.

XIV

To MONSIEUR ALFRED TATTET

MONSIEUR:

To-morrow morning, my dear friend, I leave for Augerville with my brother. We shall probably remain there eight or ten days; after which, if you in your turn do not flit away, we shall, I hope, be back again on these tiresome but adored streets of the best and most execrable of cities.

Yours devotedly,

ALF. MUSSET.

THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1840.

XV

To THE DUCHESS OF CASTRIES

MADAME:

It is not from lack of friendship, madame, or from lack of courage that I have not gone to Dieppe to see you, but because I really found it impossible. The Augerville party was planned and settled a long time ago, and I could not withdraw from it without being rude. You saw that I hesitated, but that was either because I

always hesitate, or make believe, to acquit my conscience, because I never do what I want to, or what I should. I regret not being able to accept, as one says, your very kind invitation, for I have done foolish things in Paris, and perhaps I would have done the same at Dieppe; but they would have been different, perhaps less foolish.

Do not complain of ending the season there. I do not know if it is the end or the beginning of the season, but if dulness is a fog, you can not be seen two steps distant in Paris at this moment.

You ask me Berryer's opinion of Madame Lafarge. While the case was pending he said nothing, probably as he was consulting lawyer, but I think he is of the same opinion as you, and that I share also; I can not in the least understand why people hesitated; the testimony of Mademoiselle Brun seems to me to be conclusive.

I did not go to the *Chambre des pairs* to hear the defense of Prince Louis. This I shall always regret; but to tell you frankly, I can not bring myself to listen to a pleader as to an opera. Berryer said before the court, which might be considered the highest body in the state, that it betrayed every one, abandoned every one, deceived every one, and this he said, as you express it, for the love of money and office, and the peers cried bravo! just as though they had been listening to Rubini sing. It is wonderful!

Yes, madame, you have great reason to be thankful that you are a woman. I at once agree with whatever you say in regard to it, and even about the *dix annies indevinables.* Nevertheless, let me make one observation: it becomes you to speak in this way because you are a woman, a real woman, because you have made a noble and good use of your life and your faculties; but allow me to think that there are few, very few women so courageous as you; and, indeed, those men who have lived bravely can also remember that they have at times been less gentle, yes and less calm, if as profound. Finally, it seems to me that it does not matter so much which sex people are, for the difference lies rather in the person himself. The ordinary, small, contracted life that most people lead and call living, destroys the little good there is in us. Those who break this ice might be singled out, and usually men have the great advantage of being free to do as they like, so they can dispense with hypocrisy. If few men know how to be happy, few women dare to be happy. Among lovers, one will always be the ruling influence, the other one is but the usufructary, and in this I acknowledge your superiority; we taste happiness, but you know its secret.

You ask me about a wretched fellow, which is myself. I think I have the right to say that I am bored, because I know quite well why. You

tell me that I lack faith. No, madame: I have had, or rather thought I had the dreadful malady called *doubt,* which in reality is nothing but a trifling affair, when it is feigned deliberately to make a show; I have not only faith to-day, in many things, excellent things, but I do not even think that if I were deceived, or were to deceive others, I would lose this faith.

As for those who look at things from a higher standpoint and from the standpoint of faith like Sister Marceline, I can say nothing about them. The belief in God is innate in me; it is impossible for me to believe in dogma and the confessional, but I shall offer no defense; truly, I am not devoted to these things. What I lack now, as I said to you, is something much more terrestrial. I told you how an absurd, useless, and somewhat ridiculous passion made me change all my habits for nearly a year. I left my surroundings, my friends, my usual environment, for one of the most beautiful women of Paris. To be sure, I did not succeed in my foolish fancy and truly I am now cursed, but dried up like a fish in a wheat-field, for I never was able, am not, nor never will be able to live all by myself, and call it living. I would prefer being an Englishman. This is all I have to trouble me. You see that I am neither blasé nor bored without cause, but purely and simply because I have nothing to do. I do not think it would be difficult to cure

me; although it might not be very easy either. I never was a commonplace person. Fashionable women on the one hand, seem to me to be playing a comedy without knowing their rôles; on the other hand, my lost love-affairs have left some scars which nothing can efface. What I need is a woman who is something, no matter what; either very beautiful, very good, very wicked, in a strict sense, very intelligent, or very dull, but at least remarkable for something.

If you know such a one, madame, I beg you will catch me by the sleeve when you meet her. As for me, I have not seen any.

Believe, madame, in my most sincere and respectful friendship.

A. DE MUSSET.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER, 1840.

XVI

TO THE DUCHESS OF CASTRIES

MADAME:

I was more than sorry that I received your little note too late yesterday. I was out when it came. Pardon me, I beg you, for my ingratitude. Just now I am working, and you know I continue incessantly. Be well assured, madame, that my legs are not guilty of coming toward you.

WEDNESDAY.

XVII

To the Duchess of Castries

Madame:

I have just returned home, and it is two o'clock. I return, not sad, but somewhat tired, and with the presentiment that I shall be bored, which produces fatigue, waiting like Scapin to seize me at every bad news. Instead of that, I found your good and charming letter that puts me in tune with myself, by showing me how many noble sentiments frankly thought, and gracefully expressed, were written to me. A thousand thanks for this ray of sunlight you sent me. It was in your heart and in your eyes as you wrote. I am not worthy to think of it this evening; but I would not go to sleep tonight without thanking you, and I ask your pardon for doing it so badly.

My respectful and devoted compliments.

A. M.

Saturday Evening.

XVIII

To His Godmother

Madame:

I can not go to see you this evening, my dear godmother, because I am ill with the grippe, which gives me much pain in my side, as the

hypochondriac would say. I hope that you will not consider this very good reason given as an excuse, when I tell you that it will prevent me from mounting guard to-morrow, and perhaps even from going to prison Thursday. You know that I consider this the most important of my duties. You need not leave Paris to make me regret that I have written in such bad style. I shall not tell you that I have seen no one this winter, for that would not be a good reason for not having seen you. Say that I did not exist. That would be the real truth, and I am not yet ready to step out of my grave.

Compliments on legal cap.

ALF. M.

APRIL 13, 1841.

XIX

TO HIS GODMOTHER, IN VERSAILLES

MADAME:

I have complained to my heart's content; but I can not make myself write to that fierce person. No, I will not write. Because at Versailles there is a fine big demon and a pretty little geni, as mischievous as small, so much the worse for the little one, for I must write.

Tell me, godmother, can you imagine any one more inhuman than this person? She tells me that she has a friendly feeling toward me—to-

ward me, fool that I was, to believe what she said. I told her in a dozen letters that she was one of those whom I loved best. She replied, "Come." I went to her, at the peril of my life, and then, on account of a bad joke that I made at table—a joke which you would not have paid the least attention to—she picked a German quarrel, or rather a Patagonian one, when I was playing a game of chess, which, it is needless to say, I lost. She saw that she was giving me exquisite pain, then see, she struck me dumb with her charming smile, her dimples, and her glances that gave me a headache. No, it is not possible to be more hopeful. And I also think it very difficult for any one to be more bored than I was yesterday, on this infernal Paris street, which purposely stretched its length before me, like Pantalon's nose in the *Pilules du Diable.* My godmother, I beg you to say a paternoster for me, for it is making me ill. And can you imagine this person (I refuse to call her by name), forbidding me to drink wine pure, because I have a cough, and clapping on my back a poultice that pricks like a thousand pins? How refreshing! One has only to love in earnest! who can tell? to be put on a fine diet of gooseberry sirup and torture?

My godmother, I am beginning to be even tired of scolding. If this consolation were denied me nothing would be left to do for me

but to throw flowers on my grave. Try then to throw one little *Vergiss-mein-nicht* (forget-me-not), and make sure that it will grow.

Yours,

ALF. M.

TUESDAY, JULY 26, 1842.

XX

To His Godmother

MADAME:

First of all let me thank my little godmother, who has not forgotten her old habit of writing to her son when he needs it. Nothing is more acceptable, or pleasing to me than these little theatrical gossips.

Always feel thus toward me, godmother, feel thus toward me no matter what happens. A sentiment like this should shield me from everything and console me for much. The public has almost accepted Urania's opinion. I have been told it prefers the serious side of my verses! * Perhaps rightly; but after all, what folly to make art and pedantry subservient to a whim! It seems to me if liberty is allowed in anything is should be in things of this kind. But, as Liszt said: "The public is conceited."

I must tell you about two experiences which

* The verses to Léopardi, entitled *Aprés une Lecture.*

chanced to happen at the Italians two successive days (I should say at the Italian theater).

First experience. Imagine, godmother, that I went to see *Norma* last Sunday, which was natural enough. Well, I had taken seat No. 25, in the balcony. Why? because it was the end seat, and that in the box I expected to find someone whom you do not know. I arrived, elegantly perfumed, at the stroke of eight, and found in seat No. 23, that is next to me, a young woman, a former lady-love of one of my friends. She spoke to me. It was impossible not to reply—so every one saw me tranquilly seated beside this young girl in the very midst of a balcony full of Italian singers. I accepted the inevitable—and they glanced at me, or rather looked disapprovingly upon me—I determined to go, and left abruptly as I knew I should.

Second experience. Last Thursday I went to see *la Linda di Chamouny*. There are some good things in it, it is worth while for you to hear. I like Brambilla, even if she cuts the worst figure in the world in the costume of Savoyard. When I arrived I asked a speculator for a ticket. The countess of —— had sold her box. He found he could give me a place in it. I entered the proscenium-box, and perceived directly in front of me Beligiojoso, who turned toward me in astonishment. It was not to see me he had come there. (In front of me, by way of explana-

tion, sat also the ungrateful Pauline.) During the intermission, Beligiojoso encountered me in the corridor. We promenaded, the best friends in the world, and he seemed glad to hear I had paid for my seat, so much so that we arranged to take supper together Wednesday. It occurred to me that some people regarded us with a little surprise.

These are my experiences. They are not of much account, as you see; but I thought you would perhaps be amused.

You know that the *little one* is away perhaps for a long time. That has grieved me much more than I acknowledge, not only because I love my brother very much, but he is my companion as well, and he has had, in these last tedious days, so much concern and pity for me, that his absence leaves me terribly alone. How many things have been taken from me this year!

Adieu, godmother, love me a little, love me as much as possible. My heart is cold and I have need of help to live.

November 23, 1842.

XXI

To His Brother, in Italy

January, 1843.

My Dear Brother:

I know, my dear brother, that you have had a good voyage and that you amuse yourself; that does not astonish me; even Hetzel says you are the only one in the world who can take pleasure in traveling alone.

In regard to me, I will tell you that I am reconciled with Rachel. I met her at supper at Buloz's, and we have shaken hands. You know that she lives on the wharf, like the chevalier of Marjolaine. It is a good neighborhood.

Have you seen in Genoa the fine garden, over the gate of which is written: *Hic mihi jucunda solitudo, amicitia jacundior*? It is the one your humble servant likes best. Madame Sands speaks of it in the *Lettres d'un Voyageur*. It has a fountain and delicious grotto.

I am very well, and hope you are also; amuse yourself above everything and write me the news from Naples.

Alfred.

XXII

To His Brother, in Italy

February, 1843.

My Dear Brother:

I add this to my mother's letter to answer your questions.

I took supper at Buloz's Twelfth Night. All the *Revue* were there, also Rachel. There was a slight coolness; it was, as one might say, a diplomatic dinner. A happy chance gave the plum to Henri Heine, who pretended he did not know what they wanted him to do with it, so that the cake on which the hostess had counted to enliven the evening was useless. Fortunately Chaudes-Aigues became tipsy—this broke the ice. Rachel asked me if we were not sorry, with such a gracious and coquettish air that I replied: "Why have you not looked at me so before, and asked this same question three years ago? You know that I bear no malice and our quarrel should not have lasted twenty-four hours." She gave me even a more coquettish glance than the first, saying, "How much time lost!" And we shook hands again, repeating it was over. Rachel invited me to see her, and I am going thursday. That is the whole story. Chenavard came to see me and told me his troubles in playing chess.

Adieu, my dear brother; I am as wise as a rosary. Amuse yourself and love us.

ALF. M.

XXIII

To MADAME MÉNESSIER-NODIER

MADAME:

I thank you, madame, I thank you, for your thanks. I fear that you have been frightened only by a sonnet; this is why I exert myself to reassure you. You are wrong in believing silence means nothing; it sometimes means very much, even too much, and then not enough. I think Odrey himself, from whom you have quoted a memorable phrase to me, will agree about that. You see I remember my authors. Seriously speaking, I thank you a thousand times for your good and kind letter, and I pray you to accept the assurance of my most distinguished and respectful regards.

ALF. DE MUSSET.

FRIDAY, MAY, 1843.

If you should meet Dr. Neophous, would you have the kindness to make my very humble compliments to him on some pages of the *Revue de Paris,* in which he has taken the opportunity of being both charming and reasonable, which is becoming more and more rare.

XXIV

To His Brother, in Italy

Monday, May 22, 1843.

My Dear Brother:

I thank you for your letter, my dear brother. It has given me much pleasure, *to me first,* as our friend de Guer says, and then to others. I have shown Madame J—— the drawing of Catanea this evening. She has requested me to tell you that she did not write to you while you were in Sicily, because she feared there would be an eruption and that amid the ashes all that would be left would be your pocket and her letter.

As I am speaking about rue T. . . ., you must know that lately there has been a rage for magnetism. It is the most curious thing in the world. I have been present at several séances. What I first saw seemed impossible to me. I magnetised the little Alexis (that is the name of a medium) three times, in a séance at which, by the way, Paulette assisted. She sang a Sicilian air by Palestrina for us, which is the most beautiful thing it is possible to hear.

The three following times I only saw nonsense —or tricks of cards and such things. Alexis played *écarté* with me blindfolded, but very badly. He, however, did some singular things: With two layers of cotton on his eyes and a tightly bound

handkerchief over that, he played with the grave councilors, not only very cleverly, but indicated the play of his adversary—of which I will show you an example: "Why do you not play the queen of diamonds?" touching the card with his fingers. That was not easy, but it did not convince me. Mademoiselle Julie (another medium) began in the same way by being stupid as a goose, and this is what she did: Achilles magnetized her, Achilles himself, who was not in league with her.* I asked her if she could read a word, not written, but in my thoughts. She said "Yes." I took her hand. I thought of the name Rachel. She told me she saw the letters, but could not read the word (in my brain, remember).

I asked her if she could write these letters. "Yes." She was given paper and a pencil. She wrote C-L-E at first, and immediately in one stroke A-H. She tried a long time and finally wrote "Charle." This is exactly the anagram of Rachel. These are the same letters. Was it not strange?

It must be said that I aided her a little, against my will. But how could the word be found, hidden or not, in the brain of a man. As for the rest, the same Mademoiselle Julie quickly read your real name written by my white hand on a piece of paper which I had carefully slipped

* Mr. Achilles Bouchet.

in the back of her dress. This style of reading was not very convenient. She repeated constantly Po, Po, in a lifeless voice. "Well," said Achilles, "Po, Po, what then?" She burst into a laugh and pronounced your name. Thus, my dear brother, you have the gist of the farce. What is it all about? I do not comprehend it. I do not know if any of you at Catanea have heard that prince de —— has eloped with the countess of ——. Paris knew two years ago that they were often seen together. The countess, it seems, quarreled with her husband; she sought the prince (who was to sing at a concert that evening), he had no baggage but his handkerchief, and she said to him, "Let us go now." They are *en route*. This has made a stir in Paris, at this moment, or, to be more exact, it has occasioned discussion. I have seen these little pleasantries before, and they are much more serious than one thinks. I will tell you some day; but if you will follow my advice, never run away with any one, unless it may be the queen of Spain.

Shall I tell you some more news? Mademoiselle H—— (you remember her) is married. Mademoiselle de B—— is married. Mademoiselle T—— was a bride a month ago and has died. A——, the new marquis, is enjoying his honeymoon.

The tragedy of *Judith,* by Madame de Gira-

din, has been played by Rachel. To-morrow I go to the house of Madame de G——, to hear Mademoiselle Hagn, the first tragédienne of Germany, who, it is said, declaims in German before Rachel. I shall regret not to be able to tell you about it. It will be curious—no one will understand a word. M. Ponsard, a young author who has come from the country, has produced at the Odéon a tragedy called *Lucrèce;* very good—notwithstanding—the actors. He is the lion of the day; no one speaks of any one but him, and this is right. I am reconciled with Victor Hugo; we met each other at breakfast at the house of Guttinguer. Madame Hugo sent me her album; I have written a verse in it on the meeting, which really touched me deeply and it has brought me a very nice letter. I have written several sonnets for Madame Ménessier, who in return has sent me two very pretty ones. Hetzel is astonished at it. Chenavard continues to go to the Divan.

Adieu, my dear brother. I send you this nonsense, from a distance of four or five hundred miles, as if we were talking at supper. Amuse yourself, keep well; we all love you.

Your brother and friend.

ALF. M.

XXV

To Monsieur Alfred Tattet

My Dear Alfred:

Among the reasons which have prevented me from joining you is the following: that M. Bocage, director of the Odéon, has come to ask my permission to produce at this theater one of my little proverbs entitled *Un Caprice,* to which I acceded, after having taken the advice of several great experts in case of a *fiasco.* I will not have given it to the Français, which is very serious; but to the Odéon, which amuses me very much, without endangering my fame, as this little play has been presented six or seven years ago and was not meant for the stage. Thus I am to be represented by Bocage himself, the father of Antony and porter of Nesle, otherwise a very agreeable and fine man, who does everything to oblige me and who will make for me a little decoration to lessen the size of the hall.

I must, therefore, go to Paris, although I do not wish to busy myself with it. I hope that you will come there. It is your duty to be there; you will have the right to partake of the baked apples thrown to your brother. This will happen, I believe, in the month of November. The rehearsals

have begun, but I have not seen them. My leading lady, Mademoiselle Naptal, has called upon me, with her papa. She is pretty; this is always a good sign.

ALF. M.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1845.

XXVI

TO HIS BROTHER, AT ANGERS

MY DEAR BROTHER:

I send you, by my mother, a communication of which I can understand nothing. Besides that I have a request to make: a very good and honest boy, named Piot, goes to Venice, and has asked me if I would write him a recommendation to you. He wishes to be allowed to go to the archives of the libraries; but not with any political or literary object. He is interested in drawings and engravings, and hopes to find some there. I trust you can do him this kindness without inconvenience. He goes in eight days. I have not promised him that you will do it, but that I would ask you to. I have been two hours reading your proofs; there were only a few mistakes to be corrected. Shake our new brother by the hand; embrace my mother; say to my sister how much I miss her now she has gone. I will write to her.

Our uncle has left me to go to Melun. I no longer have any one to console me but the angels, old Renote and the little bird.

Yours,
ALF. M.

JULY 7, 1846.

XXVII

TO MONSIEUR ALFRED TATTET

I thank you for your letter, my dear friend. Nothing has come to either my father or me but fatigue. Even as I write I lay aside the uniform which I have scarcely dared take off since the insurrection began. I will not tell you anything of the horrors which are taking place; they are too hideous.

In the midst of these pleasant recollections I must tell you that poor Uncle van Buck has produced his comedy.* It was successful, and I can say completely so without exaggeration. It was the evening of the insurrection; I had found a hall filled and decorated with pretty women, people of intellect, an excellent parterre for me, very good actors, and finally, everything of the best. I have had my evening. I had taken it, so to speak, on the wing. After the play, all the actors were called out and even the author,

* "One Must Not Swear to Anything." Comedy in three acts presented at the Theater Français, June 22, 1848.

whom you may well believe did not appear. The next day, good-by to this! actors, director, author, prompter, had guns in their hands, and the cannon for orchestra, conflagrations for light, and a parterre of enraged vandals. The firmness of the militia was the only thing which kept up our courage. They were nearly all mere children. I never dreamed of seeing anything like that. A thousand respectful regards to Madame Tattet. I write in haste and grasp your hand affectionately.

ALF. M.

JULY 1, 1848.

XXVIII

TO HIS BROTHER

MY DEAR BROTHER:

A disagreeable thing has happened! I was informed that the Academy has given me a prize, but I do not know on what terms. They came to tell me and I found them insulting. I have been writing twenty years; altogether thirty-eight, and they inform me that I am a young man who is worthy of encouragement in his career. When the critic made me these compliments I scorned them; but coming from the Academy this was serious. It would have made me appear proud and susceptible, and how can I, at my age, permit myself to be treated like

a student. What is to be done? I need your advice very much. Come to me this evening before going to bed, or leave the key in the door; we must talk it over together. Yours,

ALF. M.

THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1848.

At the meeting of August 17, 1848, the French Academy bestowed upon Alfred de Musset the prize founded by M. de Maillé Latour Landry. In accordance with the intentions of the founder, this prize was yearly to be given to a young writer or artist of unusual talent, who was worthy of encouragement in following his career in letters or the arts. See an allusion to it in the book of the *Mélanges* (Medleys), the letter which Alfred de Musset wrote to the *National* under date of August 21, 1848.

XXIX

TO MONSIEUR ALFRED TATTET

DEAR ALFRED:

I would go to see you, my dear friend, but something new always comes up to prevent me. It would seem that I have nothing to do, and that is why I am so much occupied. I will tell you about it, because it would take a whole volume to write you these three little talks. As soon as I can, I will *acquaint* you, as they say.

I write you this in haste, for I see that if I wait until I have more time, I would never do it.

ALF. M.

MARCH 15, 1849.

XXX

To Monsieur Alfred Tattet, at Fontainebleau.

Dear Alfred:

I am very sure you will not believe me when I tell you, my dear Alfred, that I had decided to go to see you. However, I will prove it by two truthful witnesses, my trunk and Mlle. Colin, one as good as the other. Ask them if it is not true they are eight days late and that each morning my shirts grow less one by one. In reply to your reproachful letter I would have thrown myself into a coach; but the gods have ordained otherwise. First, as you say, because my proverb has been played.* Second, it is to be played again. I only trust that its baptism prove as light as its birth has been welcome. While at Monsieur Pleyel's I had the great honor of choosing my audience. You know what I mean; all these charming people who had apparently disappeared were there the same as last year. The little rosy faces looking out of the bonnets, and the little white hands peeping out from the mits. Now I am beginning to occupy myself with universal suffrage and also with the newspaper

* "One Can Not Think of Everything." Presented for the first time in the parlors of M. Pleyel, Wednesday, May 3, 1848.

clique. To tell you truly, I am somewhat amused at the really delightful morning I had at rue Rochechouart. Let the little priests do their best, their images would not crush a leaf of the bouquet that passed before me; I look elsewhere for consolation.

This, my dear friend, is why I am still here. Now I take my mother to Angers. If I might have been excused I would have bid you good morning, but I can not. Never be angry with your best friend.

ALF. M.

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 1849.

XXXI

TO MONSIEUR CHARPENTIER

JANUARY, 1850.

DEAR CHARPENTIER:

I am truly distressed, my dear friend, to see that by enlarging our volume we have introduced some things of no value, and which even twenty years ago I was not willing to publish in my first book. Are we not making a great mistake? Shall we not now rectify it? Would it not be better to make a smaller and more suitable volume? Will it not sell, even if it is a little cheaper? As for me, I have done well, I am not afraid to correct the *Derniers Moments de Francis I.* It has been of no use for nineteen

years. Make an effort, in the name of Heaven; let me give to the public what I will be satisfied with. You will relieve me of a great burden.

Yours,

ALF. DE MUSSET.

It might be supposed from this letter that we had wished to force Alfred de Musset to introduce verses which he had condemned, but that was not so. We only voiced the propositions which had been addressed to us, and, far from insisting, we applaud his resolution. CH.

XXXII

TO MONSIEUR VERON.

MY DEAR VÉRON:

I have been ill and am not well yet. I have read *Carmosine* and am perfectly satisfied with the manner in which the play has been abridged and printed. This evening I found one mistake; unfortunately it was in the verses, in this strophe: *Depuis le jour ou* (Since the day when), etc.

> Were it an instant, yet while I have breath
> Can I not show the thought that I've possessed,
> With which I feel to such a point oppressed,
> That, dying thus, makes me afraid of death.

It can readily be seen that the two words *mourant ainsi* (dying thus) are introduced in parentheses and that the sense must be com-

pleted by what follows as *à tel point oppressée que la mort* (so oppressed that death), etc.

With which I feel to such a point oppressed.

Mourant ainsi (dying thus) is evidently written instead of *en mourant ainsi*—which is often done, and is permissible in verse. Instead of this, I find it printed:

That dying thus, makes me afraid of death!

With an exclamation point.

Not only does this change the two verses, but it is not correct French to put a period after *à tel point oppressée* (so oppressed), for *à tel point* should be followed by *que*.

I do not like to tell you how much distressed I am about this. I would rather not tell you, because it seems very ungrateful for me to complain after all the trouble you have taken. If a mistake had been found anywhere else, I certainly would not say a word; but this occurred in the verses, while the rest is wonderfully well written; this is what troubles me so frightfully. Could not this fault be corrected by an *erratum*, or by reprinting the verses separately?

Be good enough to send me a line I pray you. Just now my head feels like that of a sick man. I hope, at all events, you will not think I have given myself up to despair, because I have used these expressions involuntarily. Above all, I

hope you will not think me unappreciative of all the trouble you have taken.

A thousand friendly greetings.

ALF. DE MUSSET.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1850.

XXXIII

TO HIS BROTHER

MY DEAR BROTHER:

The countess Kalergis has written me a complimentary letter upon *Carmosine*. It is full of kindness. It matters not that she has told me that the verses are incomprehensible. When you dine with her to-day be kind enough to explain the two mutilated verses. This mistake has given me much concern. I never would have believed that a period put in the place of a comma could have kept a sensible man awake for three nights. It is unfortunate for me that we no longer live together. This would not have happened at the Voltaire wharf if you had been by. My uncle laughs at my chagrin, and pretends that no one has noticed the oversight. If what he says is true, I admit I would be foolish to grieve; but I would be yet more foolish to write.

Always yours,

ALF. M.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1850.

XXXIV

To His Brother

My Dear Brother:

Will you have the goodness to send me the *Nouvelle Héloïse* of J. J.? I need it for my present work.

My uncle is dining here. I am in a dreadful perplexity, having two parts all ready for Rachel (you know that I have written a play for her—but say nothing about it), and do not know which to begin with. I am horribly pressed for time. You will render me a great service if you will advise me, and you will be an excellent judge, for it is not to know which is the better that troubles me, but which would be the better for my fame and my purse. If you can come a moment this evening it would be charming—but when it suits you—I would go to you, but it is ten days since I have been out.

Yours,

September, 1851. Alf. M.

XXXV

To His Brother

My Dear Brother:

I am much perplexed and have great need of council. Rose Chéri is to play my little piece,*

* Bettina.

but the Director dissuades me from Geoffroy in every way. He insists upon giving me Dupuis, of whom he tells me wonderful things. He states that, in *la Grandmère*, Scribe has been charmed by the aforesaid Dupuis, who has become an excellent actor—I knew him when he was not. They have told me to ask your advice. I will go to you to-morrow morning before noon. If you can not be at home, appoint a time.

Always yours,

ALF. M.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 1 or 8, 1851.

End of the Posthumous Works.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Alfred de Musset . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Supper at Mademoiselle Rachel's 119

A 000 356 46